

1995

An Empirical Examination of the Major Organizational Dimensions that Influence the Perceived Quality of Federal Personnel Office Services

John Elton Dunning
johndunning@cox.net

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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

DOCTOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

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*An Empirical Examination of the Major Organizational
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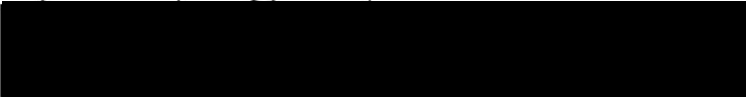
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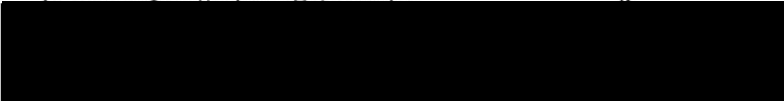

Amin Alimard, D.P.A., Committee Chair


Charles M. Byles, D.B.A.


Leigh E. Grosenick, Ph.D.


Janet R. Hutchinson, Ph.D.


Blue E. Wooldridge, D.P.A.


Ralph S. Hambrick, Jr., Ph.D., DPA Director


David R. Hiley, Ph.D., Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences

August 25, 1995

DATE

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1995

**AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL
DIMENSIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF
FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICE SERVICES**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Public Administration at
Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

John Elton Dunning

B.A., Lawrence University, 1961
M.P.A., Auburn University, 1976

Director: Amin Alimard, D.P.A.
Associate Professor of Public Administration,
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
August, 1995

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
ABSTRACT	xiv
 I INTRODUCTION	 1
The General Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	3
The Research Questions	3
Theoretical Considerations	4
Definitions	6
Research Methodology	13
Significance of the Study	15
Summary and Study Overview	17
 II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	 20
The Environment of Federal Personnel Management	21
Historical Background.	22
Functions and Staffing	23
Conflicting Roles	25
Effectiveness	26
Service Quality	28
Human Resource Management Effectiveness	31
Approaches to Evaluation	31
Models of Effectiveness	38
Service Quality Measurement	45
Human Resource Department Effectiveness Criteria	46
Service Quality Criteria	48
Service Quality Research	52

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Service Quality Dimensions	55
Access	56
Product/Program Design	59
Staff Qualifications	63
Staff Attitudes	65
Customer Expectations	67
Federal Personnel Office Service Quality Model	69
Chapter Summary	71
 III RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	 77
The Research Objective	77
The General Research Questions	78
The Hypotheses	82
Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Access	83
HRM Program Design	84
FPO Staff Qualifications	85
FPO Staff Attitudes	86
Managerial Status (Customer Expectations)	88
Managerial Support (Customer Expectations)	89
Assumptions	90
DESIGN OF THE STUDY	92
Methodological Considerations	94
Sampling Procedures	95
Instrumentation	97
Data Analysis	99
Causal Inference and Validity	108
Construct Validity	108
Statistical Conclusion Validity	109
Internal Validity	111
External Validity	112
Limitations of the Study	113
Chapter Summary	115
 IV RESULTS OF THE STUDY	 117
The Managers' Survey	118
Hypothesis Testing - Managers' Survey	123
FPO Access	123
HRM Program Design	127

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Managerial Status	129
Managerial Support	132
The Personnel Specialist Survey	136
Hypothesis Testing - Personnel Specialist Survey	139
FPO Staff Qualifications	139
FPO Staff Attitudes	145
Partial Correlation Analysis	153
Summary of Findings	158
 V DISCUSSION	 163
The Research Problem and Design	163
Significant Findings	166
Findings and Current Research	170
Access	173
Product/Program Design	175
Staff Qualifications	176
Staff Attitudes	177
Managerial Status and Support	179
Implications for Current Theory	180
Service Quality Research	181
HR/Personnel Office Effectiveness	183
New HR/Personnel Administration Roles	184
Implication for Applied Settings	185
Recommendations for Future Research	188
Recommendations for Improving Service Quality	191
Alternatives to Centralization	191
Redesigned HRM Programs	193
The Needs of Top Management	194
Delegated HRM Authority	195
Service Quality as a Performance Measure	196
Summary	197
 LIST OF REFERENCES	 199
 APPENDICES	 209
Appendix 1 - Multiple Constituency Models	209
Appendix 2 - MSPB Personnel Specialist Survey	224
Appendix 3 - MSPB Manager Survey	232

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Navy Installation Sample Surveys	29
2. Air Force Installation Sample Surveys	29
3. Number and Type of Participants From Each Study Installation	97
4. FPO Service Quality Model Variables and MSPB Questions	99
5. Federal Managers' Rating of FPO Service Quality	119
6. Federal Managers' Rating of FPO Service Quality (Comparison of Means)	120
7. Question 20 - Service Quality Summary Ratings	120
8. Relationship between FPO Proximity and Managers' FPO Service Quality Ratings	125
9. Relationship between Method of Contact and Manager's FPO Service Quality Ratings	126
10. Relationship between HRM Program Design (Responsiveness in Classifying Positions) and FPO Service Quality Ratings	128
11. Relationship between Levels of Management Responsibility and FPO Service Quality Ratings	130
12. Relationship between Years as a Supervisor and FPO Service Quality Ratings	131

LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

13.	Relationship between Delegated Authority and FPO Service Quality Ratings	133
14.	Relationship between Pre-Supervisory Training and FPO Service Quality Ratings	134
15.	Relationship between Post-Supervisory Training and FPO Service Quality Ratings	135
16.	Managers' Service Quality Ratings by FPO	136
17.	FPO Service Quality Ratings - Mean Scores	137
18.	FPO Rank Order	137
19.	Relationship between Education and FPO Service Quality Ratings	140
20.	Relationship between FPO Staff Grade and FPO Service Quality Ratings	141
21.	Relationship between FPO Staff Performance Ratings and FPO Service Quality Ratings	142
22.	Relationship between FPO Staff Performance Awards and FPO Service Quality Ratings	143
23.	Relationship between FPO Staff Training and FPO Service Quality Ratings	145
24.	Relationship between FPO Staff Self-Perceived Skills and FPO Service Quality Ratings	146
25.	Relationship between FPO Staff Agreement on FPO Role of Helping Managers and FPO Service Quality Ratings	148

LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

26.	Relationship between FPO Staff Perceptions of Desired Response Time to Classify Positions and FPO Service Quality Ratings	149
27.	Federal Managers' Expectations on Time to Classify Positions	150
28.	Longest Time to Classify Positions	151
29.	Relationship between FPO Staff Perceptions of How Managers' Believe the FPO is Helping Them and FPO Service Quality Ratings	152
30.	Descriptive Statistics - Managers' Survey Variables	156
31.	Descriptive Statistics - Personnel Specialists' Survey Variables	156
32.	Relationship of Manager's Survey Predictor Variables to FPO Service Quality Ratings - Partial Correlation Coefficients	158
33.	Relationship of Personnel Specialists' Survey Predictor Variables to FPO Service Quality Ratings - Partial Correlation Coefficients	158
34.	Summary of Research Findings Based on Chi-Square, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation, and Partial Correlation Analysis	162

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Human Resource Effectiveness Model Typologies	40
2. Measures of Service Quality and HR Effectiveness Criteria	50
3. Research Supporting Conceptual Model Variables	73
4. A Conceptual Model of Federal Personnel Office Perceived Service Quality	75
5. An Operational Model of Federal Personnel Office Perceived Service Quality	76
6. Constructs Showing their Relation to Perceptions of Federal Personnel Office Service Quality	81
7. Data Analysis Plan Summarized by Null Hypothesis	105
8. An Operational Model of Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Perceived Service Quality - As Tested	165
9. Comparison of Current Research with Study Findings	171
10. Conceptual Model of Service Quality	213
11. Extended Model of Service Quality	214

LIST OF FIGURES (Continued)

12.	A Tripartite Framework of Personnel Department Effectiveness	217
13.	Action Research Model: Employee Attitudes - Customer Satisfaction - Organizational Effectiveness	219
14.	The Personnel Effectiveness Grid (Peg)	221
15.	The Personnel Effectiveness Grid (Peg) With Qualifications Added	223

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Admin	-	Administrative
Corr	-	Correlation (statistical term)
df	-	Degrees of Freedom (statistical term)
DOI	-	Department of Interior
EEO	-	Equal Employment Opportunity
FPO	-	Federal Personnel Office
GM	-	General Manager (supervisory civil service grade)
GS	-	General Schedule (non-supervisory civil service grade)
HR	-	Human Resource
HRM	-	Human Resource Management
Mgmt	-	Management
Mos	-	Months
MSPB	-	U. S. Merit Systems Protection Board
N	-	Number (statistical term)
NAPA	-	National Academy of Public Administration
NIST	-	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NPR	-	National Performance Review

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

OPM	-	Office of Personnel Management
p	-	Probability (statistical term)
P-E	-	Perceptions minus expectations
PMIR	-	Personnel Management Indicators Report
PIMS	-	Profit Impact of Marketing Strategies (a data base)
SERQUAL	-	A survey instrument measuring service quality
Sig	-	Significance (statistical term)
Std Dev	-	Standard Deviation (statistical term)
Wks	-	Weeks
Yrs	-	Years

ABSTRACT

AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICE SERVICES

John E. Dunning, D. P. A.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Public Administration.

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Major Director: Amin Alimard, D. P. A., Associate Professor of Public Administration, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Recent studies conducted by oversight agencies show that improvements are needed in Federal personnel office (FPO) operations. The existing literature and research in the field of public personnel administration provides little guidance as to what types of changes or interventions will improve service quality. The purpose of this study is to identify organizational variables that influence FPO service quality.

This study is based on the multiple-constituency model of organizational effectiveness and the body of literature pertaining to service quality research conducted in private sector service industries. The investigator developed a conceptual model of FPO service quality

based on the findings from service quality research and from various Federal personnel studies. Using the conceptual model as a guide, the statement of the problem became: How do the organizational dimensions of FPO access, human resource management (HRM) program design, FPO staff qualifications, FPO staff attitudes, Federal manager status, and Federal manager support influence the quality of FPO service as perceived by Federal managers? Within these six dimensions, sixteen variables were identified for testing. The research design was based on determining the association of sixteen predictor variables to the criterion variable of perceived service quality, using analytical surveys randomly administered to 72 personnel specialists and 269 Federal managers in six Federal government organizations. Of the sixteen variables tested, six had a significant relationship to managers' perceptions of service quality. These were FPO proximity, HRM program responsiveness, FPO staff training, FPO service standards, and a managers' supervisory level and authority for HRM actions.

The primary significance of the study is that it extends service quality theory to Federal personnel administration, it provides an additional dimension to the current multiple constituency models of personnel office effectiveness, and it provides guidance on how to improve FPO service quality.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The ability of the Federal Government to perform effectively is largely dependent on the competency, efficiency, and motivation of its two million Federal civilian employees. To assist, approximately 1,400 personnel offices operate within the executive branch of the Federal Government. These offices work with Federal managers to recruit, select, develop, motivate, and retain a well-qualified workforce within the guidelines of a merit-based civil service system. If the personnel office is not working well, it can be a costly obstacle to the efficient operation of the entire agency (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 1993, 1).

According to recent studies conducted by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), many Federal managers hold the personnel office and the services they deliver in low esteem. Less than one half of the Federal managers surveyed were satisfied with the quality of the services received to assist them in managing their human resources (MSPB 1993, 130) (OPM 1992, 16-19). The need for change has been recognized and the pace of change

was accelerated by the National Performance Review, which directed Federal service organizations, including personnel offices, to include perceptions of service quality as a measure of organizational effectiveness. The need for change is clear, however, the methods of change are not clear. While Federal agencies have made many recommendations on how Federal personnel office operations should change, there is little empirical research to suggest that these recommendations will actually improve the quality of services provided. Almost all of the literature and research concerning public personnel management focuses on the design of programs (e.g., classification, pay, testing, performance management). Very little attention has been given to personnel office operations and service delivery. This study contributes to the latter by examining variables associated with the delivery of services by personnel offices.

The General Problem

The services provided by Federal personnel offices are important to the efficient operation of Federal agencies; however Federal managers are not satisfied with the quality of services. If agencies desire to take action to improve the level of service, then the barriers to providing quality service must be identified. The general problem that this research

addresses is: What are the major organizational barriers to the delivery of high-quality Federal personnel office services to Federal managers?

Following the review of the related literature and research, the general problem is restated as a specific problem statement (Chapter Three) that covers the organizational dimensions or variables examined in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is: to (1) develop a conceptual model of Federal personnel office service quality based on the stakeholder, or multiple-constituency approach to organizational effectiveness, (2) to empirically test variables relating to the model in a Federal setting, and (3) to identify the major organizational dimensions (predictor variables) that influence the quality of services (criterion variable) provided by Federal personnel offices. The model variables have been tested using data from two analytical surveys administered by the U. S. Merit Systems Protection Board.

The Research Questions

To achieve this purpose, the following general research questions have guided the study:

1. Based on previous research, which organizational dimensions have a positive relationship to perceptions of service quality?
2. What is an appropriate conceptual model for explaining and testing the organizational dimensions that determine the perceived quality of Federal personnel office services?
3. Based on the conceptual Federal Personnel Office Service-Quality Model, which organizational dimensions influence the ultimate quality of Federal personnel office services as perceived by Federal managers?

The third research question is the basis of the problem statement and the research hypotheses discussed in Chapter Three.

Theoretical Considerations

This study is based on the recent service quality research conducted in the private sector service industries, which utilizes the stakeholder, or multiple-constituency approach to organizational effectiveness. Structural and systems theorists assume that organizations are entities, and that they are the appropriate units of analysis for organizational research and theorizing. In contrast, the stakeholder approach claims that organizations are only an extension of,

and a means for satisfying the interests of the individuals and groups that affect the organization and are affected by it. The focus is on the various internal and external groups. Examples of the Federal personnel office stakeholders would be the chief executive officer of the installation, senior executives, the director of personnel, personnel specialists, Federal managers, Federal employees, union officials, and job applicants. In the stakeholder effectiveness construct, organizational effectiveness is a value-based concept. Effectiveness lies in the eyes of the various stakeholders, because different people have different preferences and expectations for an organization's performance (Shafritz and Ott 1992, 345).

Service quality theory is based on the recent research conducted in the service industries (e.g., banking, insurance, retail). Service quality research examines data regarding the various organizational stakeholders in an effort to gain knowledge about their interrelationships, such as how employee attitudes or management practices relate to customer satisfaction, or how they relate to organizational financial performance. This literature is based on the premise that service quality is a subjective concept, which means that understanding how a customer thinks about service quality is essential to effective management (Rust and Oliver 1994, 10). Managing service

quality involves three distinct aspects: designing the service product, designing the service environment, and delivering the service.

This study is based on stakeholder and service quality organization theory, and focuses on two of the federal personnel office stakeholders, the personnel specialist and the Federal manager. The “Extended Service Quality Model” (see Appendix One) developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) served as the foundation for much of the service quality research, and it was used as the conceptual base for the development of the Federal Personnel Office Service Quality Model (Figure 4). A major focus of service quality research is marketing. For this reason, some of the service quality research is not relevant to personnel office operations. Therefore, the scope of the service quality literature was selectively limited to permit a focus on the service provider (personnel specialist) and the customer (Federal manager). This study is unique in that it extends stakeholder and service quality organization theory to personnel operations and to a Federal setting.

Definitions

This study uses many terms and abbreviations that are unique to the Federal government and the Federal civil service system. For ease of

reference, all abbreviations are listed on page xii. The following terms are used throughout the study:

Concept - A concept is an idea or generalization formed from the observations of particular instances. It is created to label or classify several observations that have something in common (Kerlinger 1986, 26). Based on the literature review, all of the observations (research results) are classified into six concepts. In this paper, the term dimension is used in place of concept. To operationalize a concept a range of variables must be established for measurement. Each range of measurable variables constitutes one dimension of the problem (Babbie 1989, 130). Six dimensions relating to perceptions of service quality are examined: access, program/product design, staff qualifications, staff attitudes, managerial status, and managerial support.

Construct - The term construct is an observation that has been created or adopted to form an operational or testable variable (Kerlinger 1986, 27). Several constructs form a concept or dimension. As an example, the constructs of “proximity of the FPO” and “method of contact” form the dimension of Access.

Criterion and Predictor Variables - The criterion variable is the standard against which the importance of other variables are judged. The other variables are referred to as predictor variables in the sense that they may

be found to have variance in common with the criterion variable, and information about them could be used to predict information about the criterion variable. These are the preferred terms for this study. The terms dependent and independent variable are often used in place of criterion and predictor variable, respectively. These terms are considered more appropriate for experimental research, while the terms predictor and criterion variable are more appropriate for multivariate correlation analysis (Kachigan 1982).

Dimension - A range of measurable variables relating to a particular concept. See the definition of concept.

Federal Manager - Federal employees, GM - 15 or below (and their equivalents, such as Wage Grade supervisors and military officers) who exercise supervisory authority over civil service employees. GM refers to General Manager. Non-supervisory and non-managerial positions are classified as GS or General Schedule. There are fifteen grade levels in the competitive civil service. The majority of supervisors and managers are in grade levels 12 -15.

Federal Personnel Office (FPO) - A staff office within a given Federal agency or organization responsible for performing a variety of functions to support the operation of the Federal civil service system.

Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Access - The concept of access includes several dimensions, such as the physical distance between the FPO and the manager's office, the methods used by managers to obtain FPO services, the hours of FPO operation, and other physical situations that could either act as barriers or facilitate a manager's ability to have a service encounter.

Federal Personnel Office Roles - In this study four specific roles are emphasized. They are to: (1) assure compliance with laws and regulations, (2) protect employee rights, (3) help managers get their job done, and (4) promote efficiency through effective human resources management.

Federal Personnel Office Services - Actions taken by personnel specialists to respond to inquiries, process requests, provide information, or advise managers and employees regarding personnel functions such as classification, staffing, training, employee relations, or labor relations. These actions represent service encounters or the delivery of service, and form the basis for a service quality assessment.

Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Staff - This term refers to the personnel specialists working for Federal personnel offices. For the purpose of this study, the director of personnel and employees working in Federal

personnel offices who do not provide direct contact or customer services to Federal managers are excluded.

Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Staff Attitudes - This relates to the service culture or service attitudes of the personnel specialists who provide direct service and support to federal managers. In this study indicators are perceptions of the role of the personnel office, orientation and familiarity with customer needs and expectations, and perceptions of the quality of the service being delivered.

Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Staff Qualifications - This relates to a set of measurements including formal education, formal training, years of experience, and individual performance ratings/awards of the personnel specialists providing direct service and support to Federal managers.

Human Resource/s (HR) - For the purpose of this study, this refers to all federal employees working for the various federal agencies.

Human Resource Management (HRM) - See Personnel Management.

Human Resource Management (HRM) Program Design - HRM programs refer to the specific activities required to manage human resources. Examples of these activities are recruiting, selection, placement, classification, promotion, and reassignment. The design of these programs refers to the nature of the policies and procedures established

as guidelines. Design characteristics usually focus on degrees of complexity, flexibility, responsiveness, and delegated decision authority.

Managerial Status (Federal Manager) - For the purpose of this study, status is supervisory level and years of Federal service.

Managerial Support (Federal Manager) - For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the support a manager or supervisor receives from their immediate supervisor and the organization as reflected in the amount of authority they have been delegated for managing their human resources and the extent to which they have been prepared for supervisory responsibilities.

Perceived Service Quality - The extent to which a service encounter meets a customer's expectation in relation to a set of criteria involving reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and innovation. In this study perceived service quality is measured by Federal managers' response to six survey questions asking for an evaluation of the services provided.

Personnel Management - This term emphasizes the operational activities involved in managing the employees in an organization. This includes the day to day emphasis on compliance with equal employment and other laws, and assisting managers with activities such as interviewing, hiring, and training employees. In the late 1980's organizations began to take a

strategic focus, which led to an expanded role for the personnel office and managers. The strategic focus considers employees as organizational resources (along with capital and financial resources) in achieving long term organizational objectives. With this focus came the name change from personnel management to human resource management. Although the federal government does have a strategic focus, the “name” has not changed. Therefore, in this study the terms personnel management and human resource management are used interchangeably. To be consistent with the literature, the term human resource management (HRM) is used almost exclusively in Chapter Two and beyond.

Personnel Specialists - Non-supervisory personnel specialists and personnel assistants who provide direct delivery of service to federal managers are classified as personnel specialists. Excluded are employees working in the FPO who have a primary responsibility in the area of administration.

Service Quality Ratings - This refers to the assessment of personnel office services made by federal managers in response to survey questions.

Research Methodology

This research study involves two phases. Phase one is an in-depth review of the literature pertaining to federal personnel office operations, human resource (HR) management effectiveness, multiple-constituency theory, Federal personnel demonstration projects, and service quality research with the objective of developing a conceptual model of Federal personnel office service quality (See Chapter Two, Figure 4). Six major organizational dimensions (categories of predictor variables) are identified based on classifying the appropriate research findings. The first two dimensions are organizational design variables; they are (1) Federal personnel office (FPO) access and (2) Human Resource Management (HRM) program design. The next two variables are organizational delivery variables; they are (3) FPO staff qualifications and (4) FPO staff attitudes. The next two categories of variables relate to the customer; they are (5) managerial status, and (6) managerial support. These dimensions will be examined for their association with perceived service quality. The quality of the service or product being delivered to managers will be measured based on manager's perceptions. The preliminary model distinguishes between "service delivered" and "perceived service quality," as the exact same service will be perceived to be of differing quality by different managers depending on their status and the support

they receive from top management. Based on the review of the literature (Chapter Two) constructs are identified to operationalize the model (see Figure 5) and provide the preliminary hypotheses for testing. Phase two of the study involves a test of the conceptual model constructs in a Federal setting. The research design is based on an examination of the association between sixteen predictor variables and a criterion variable using analytical survey data. Existing survey data will be used for this study. In 1991/1992 the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) conducted a study to determine how well Federal personnel offices were working. Although the MSPB study was primarily interested in collective data and descriptive statistics, the manner in which the study was conducted made the data compatible for this study. The MSPB study used two randomly administered surveys, one for managers and one for personnel specialists, to collect data from organizations served by six different personnel offices. The MSPB evaluators administered the survey in group sessions to 72 personnel specialists and 269 managers. Following each session, they were invited to participate in focus groups and elaborate on their responses. The surveys contained the questions needed to test variables included in each of the six major organizational dimensions delineated by the model. A total of twenty three variables

were identified in the literature review. Sixteen of these variables were tested in this study.

The MSPB data supports the design of this study, which calls for two different units of analysis. One level requires the analysis of individual respondents, and the other level requires analysis of organizational entities, each comprising a group of respondents. The design of the study supports its purpose by identifying the nature of the relationships between a set of predictor variables (organizational dimensions) and the criterion variable (perceived service quality). The strength of the relationships will provide a basis for developing plausible arguments on the type of interventions that can be taken to remove the barriers to the delivery of high-quality service to federal managers.

Significance of the Study

The study of the organizational dimensions that influence the perceived quality of Federal personnel office services is important as it will contribute to scholarly research, organizational practices, and personnel theory. This study contributes to scholarly research by extending service quality theory to the field of public personnel management. As previously stated, the focus of personnel research has been on the design of programs rather than on the operations of the

personnel office. By making the assumption that personnel is a service operation, the results of research conducted in private sector service industries can be applied to Federal personnel operations. If this assumption is correct, a gap in the personnel management literature is filled. The results will tend to support or reject the assumption.

There are several models of human resource management effectiveness that are based on the stakeholder, or multiple-constituency approach. These models provide insight into evaluating organizational practices and predicting organizational outcomes (See Appendix One). While these models use customer satisfaction or customer perceptions of HR service as a measure of effectiveness, they do not deal with the organizational variables that predict levels of customer satisfaction or customer perceptions of service quality. The model used as the framework for this study adds this relationship to the multiple-constituency approach.

The current trend in human resources administration is to move the responsibility and accountability for managing human resources from the personnel office to line managers. The evolving role of the personnel specialist is that of consultant and advisor to management as opposed to the traditional role of being the source of influence and expertise (National Academy of Public Administration 1993, 11).

Consistent with this evolving role is the use of customer perceptions as a measure of organizational effectiveness. Currently, Federal personnel office effectiveness is based on compliance with Federal directives (MSPB 1992, 5). By focusing on the personnel specialist and the manager as the primary stakeholders, and by using the manager's perceptions of service quality as a measure of organizational effectiveness, this study supports the evolving trends. Findings pertaining to the nature of the relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable (perceived service quality) provide a slightly different perspective for developing personnel theory.

Summary and Study Overview

A primary role of a Federal personnel office is to assist managers in recruiting, selecting, developing, motivating, and retaining a well-qualified and representative federal workforce. Recent studies by the Office of Personnel Management and the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board have shown that almost half of the Federal managers are not satisfied with the quality of the services provided by the personnel offices. This situation leads to the general problem of identifying the organizational barriers to the delivery of high-quality services to Federal managers. This research proposes to identify these barriers by

empirically examining the association between sixteen organizational variables and perceptions of service quality.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature. Six specific areas are examined. First, the environment of Federal personnel management is examined to justify the need for this study. Second, human resource management and organizational theory are discussed to establish the framework for this study. Third, the various methods and models of evaluating human resource management effectiveness are reviewed to identify the most appropriate framework for examining the perceived quality of Federal personnel office service delivery. Fourth, the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of personnel office services is compared to the criteria for examining the effectiveness of services in the private sector. This comparison will support the assumption that the personnel office is a service agency and that private sector service quality research findings can be used to develop constructs to test in a Federal setting. The fifth area examined is the concept of perceived service quality and how this can be measured. The sixth and final areas reviewed are the pertinent service quality research findings and the results of federal personnel surveys. These findings are summarized (Figure 3) and form the basis of the conceptual (Figure 4) and operational model (Figure 5) of Federal personnel office perceived service quality.

Chapter Three is the Research Design and Methodology. This chapter begins with a review of the research questions, clarifies the problem statement, states the formal hypotheses to be tested, and reviews the key assumptions of this study. The second half of the chapter discusses the design of the study to include a restatement of the research objective, methodological considerations, the data analysis plan, causal inference and study validity, and limitations of the study. Chapter Four presents the results of the study and Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to current research and applied settings.

Appendix One contains conceptual models pertinent to this research. Appendices Two and Three contain copies of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board sample surveys used in study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the environment of Federal personnel management, the relevant literature pertaining to personnel management effectiveness, service quality research, and Federal personnel studies. The review provided the basis for developing a conceptual model of Federal personnel office (FPO) perceived service quality. The literature review contains six sections. In the first section, The Environment of Federal Personnel Management, the civil service legislation leading to the current complex administrative situation is examined, the functions and staffing of the personnel office is reviewed, the problem of conflicting roles is discussed, and studies examining the quality of services are summarized. The second section, Human Resource Management Effectiveness, explains approaches to evaluating personnel or human resource management (HRM) effectiveness, and discusses models of effectiveness in an effort to identify the best analytical approach and model type to use to evaluate perceived service quality as a FPO performance measure. The following section, Service Quality

Measurement, examines the criteria used for evaluating the services provided by the personnel office and compares this to the criteria used to evaluate services provided in the various service industries (banking, insurance, retail, etc.). The purpose is to establish a link between the services provided by personnel offices and service quality research and theory. The fourth section, Perceived Service Quality, discusses the unique characteristics of services and how customer perceptions of quality can be measured. The following section, Service Quality Research, reviews the relevant studies that led to the operational constructs of the FPO service quality model. The final section summarizes the chapter and contains a figure (Figure 3) showing the research supporting the conceptual and operational model variables. The conceptual model (Figure 4) shows the six dimensions of service quality, and the operational model (Figure 5) shows the underlying constructs of the conceptual model that can be operationalized for hypothesis testing.

The Environment of Federal Personnel Management

This section examines the historical background of today's personnel system, the functions and staffing of FPOs, how the roles of the personnel office conflict, and the results of recent surveys on the quality of services provided to Federal managers.

Historical Background

Today's Federal personnel system started as a response to a perceived need for a systematic method of selecting Federal employees. The Pendleton Act of 1883 established the premise that the "spoils system" of hiring, based on political considerations, should be replaced by a competitive system in which hiring, retention, and advancement would be based on an individual's qualification for the job. This act established a Civil Service Commission to develop guidelines and provide oversight. At that time only a small percentage of Federal jobs were covered by the new system and most of the jobs did not require technical qualifications. As the Federal civil service grew in size and complexity, so did the governing policies and regulations. The Classification Acts of 1923 and 1949 established standards for every position and detailed review procedures. The Performance Rating Act of 1950, the Incentive Awards Act of 1954, and the Salary Reform Act of 1962 established extensive guidelines on pay and performance. The Civil Rights Acts of the 1960's established highly complex policies and procedures affecting all recruiting, hiring, training, promotion, and retention actions. The next major legislative effort to improve the Federal personnel system was the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. While this legislation brought some fundamental improvements to the system, the overall personnel system

became more complex as agencies developed regulations and guidance necessary to implement new programs required by the legislation. Additional legislation was enacted during the 1980's and 1990's to deal with pay and performance problems.

As a result of the legislation, the growth of the Federal work force, and the highly technical nature of today's jobs, Federal personnel offices are responsible for a large and growing list of regulations and systems that govern the management of the work force. Many of the tasks and processes carried out by the personnel office are intended to help meet government-wide public policy goals and objectives that may or may not have a direct relationship to the needs of the agency or organization they serve. This has created an environment characterized by competing demands and heavy administrative burdens (MSPB 1993, 2).

Functions and Staffing

FPOs are expected to have expertise in a wide range of areas, including labor-management relations, pay and benefits, employee relations, training and development, merit selection and promotion, equal employment opportunity , special emphasis programs, automation, and performance management. The typical personnel office organizes its staff along functional lines, with a small staff or one individual performing each function. A summary of these functions follows:

Classification - Classifying and auditing jobs within the Federal classification system and setting pay based on that classification

Staffing - Operating the competitive recruiting, hiring, and promotion process, determining the qualification of applicants according to Federal qualification standards

Training - Arranging for and often conducting training for managers and employees

Employee Relations - Assisting managers in the resolution of employee performance and conduct problems, and assisting employees with problems that affect their jobs

Labor Relations - Assisting managers in the administration of labor-management agreements

Typically each Federal agency has a headquarters personnel staff responsible for the oversight of the field personnel offices. Smaller Federal agencies, such as the Center for Disease Control, have one central personnel office to serve the entire agency. Larger agencies, such as the Department of Interior, have a headquarters staff, an intermediate headquarters staff in each bureau (Indian Affairs, Forestry, etc.), and regional or state offices to serve local operations. The Department of Defense has a headquarters personnel staff for each service (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force), regional headquarters offices at each major

command, and area personnel offices at each major installation. Headquarters personnel staffs usually perform duties related to program evaluation, program research, and personnel policy development. Operating or field staffs (Federal personnel offices) deliver services directly to managers and employees.

Personnel specialists include classification specialists, staffing specialists, employee relations specialists, training specialists, and labor relations specialists. There are also personnel generalists whose duties combine two or more of the specialties. Personnel assistants provide support to specialists and have independent responsibilities for some administrative aspects of the personnel process. For the purposes of this study all personnel specialists, generalists, and assistants will be called personnel specialists.

Conflicting Roles

There is often confusion regarding the basic purpose of the personnel office. There are three generally accepted roles, which are often seen in conflict with one another. The predominant role, and most frequently measured, is that of compliance with laws and regulations. The second is to protect employee rights, and the third is to help agency managers with their human resource needs in order to accomplish the agency mission. Because the Federal personnel system is highly rule-

bound with a narrowly focused position classification system at its core, the role of compliance has limited personnels' ability to respond to the rapidly changing needs of management, or the role of helping agency managers (Hyde and Rosenbloom 1993, 10).

Effectiveness

Traditionally, measures of personnel office effectiveness have focused on compliance with laws and regulations. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) uses a Personnel Management Indicators Report (PMIR) that compares agencies on a variety of statistical indicators such as average grade, distribution of performance ratings, and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) compliance. The compliance orientation has been reinforced through evaluations conducted by OPM and by agency personnel management evaluation teams. Compliance-oriented evaluators typically inspect records and review statistics to determine how well the office is performing compared with norms and regulatory requirements established by the agency and OPM. As a result, the focus of many personnel offices has been on keeping complete and correct records rather than on providing responsive service to managers. This deficiency was recognized in a recent report of the Merit Systems Protection Board (1992), which recommended obtaining greater involvement by line managers in future efforts to improve evaluations,

and to develop indicators that establish and reinforce the link between mission accomplishment capability and various personnel management practices, policies, and procedures (MSPB 1992, vi). The Report of the National Performance Review directed simplification and decentralization of personnel policy and a focus on providing high quality service to customers. Regarding service, the report stated, "Good service means giving people what they need. To do that, however, one must find out what they want - a step few Federal agencies have taken. In the future, Federal agencies will ask their customers what they want, what problems they have, and how agencies can improve their services" (National Performance Review 1993, 44). The report recommended that the President issue a directive requiring agencies to create customer driven programs that identify and survey customers on the results desired, on satisfaction with existing services, and surveying front-line employees on the barriers to providing high quality services. Based on these results, agencies should develop and publish a customer service plan, including an initial set of customer service standards, within one year (National Performance Review 1992, 46). Although the implementation directives vary, Federal agencies, including their personnel offices, will be required to use service quality as a measure of organizational performance.

Service Quality

FPOs and the services that they deliver are frequently held in low regard by managers. This is unfortunate, as the personnel office needs to be working well in order to contribute to an effective workforce.

Surveys conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Department of Interior (DOI), and the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) highlighted the problem.

A series of surveys conducted by OPM asked supervisors for a response to the statement, "The personnel department here provides line managers with valuable support services." The survey results are shown at Tables 1 and 2. The surveys were administered by OPM to form a data base against which to compare the results of personnel management test programs being examined at China Lake Naval Base and McClellan Air Force Base (test sites not included in data). As can be seen by the charts, satisfaction with the services of the Navy personnel offices stayed below 37% until 1987, when the Navy gave managers the flexibility and authority to manage personnel based on the amount of funds available (manage to payroll) instead of artificial statistics such as average grade and full time equivalent positions. This policy change apparently removed much of the conflict between managers and the personnel office. In the Air Force, the levels of satisfaction steadily declined from 58.4% in

Table 1

Navy Installation Sample Surveys

YEAR	DISAGREE	UNDECIDED	AGREE
1982	32.5%	37.1%	30.5%
1983	33.5%	30.0%	36.6%
1984	35.4%	28.2%	36.4%
1987*	26.5%	23.4%	50.1%
1989	22.8%	22.8%	54.4%

*Manage to payroll implemented Navy-wide

Table 2

Air Force Installation Sample Surveys

YEAR	DISAGREE	UNDECIDED	AGREE
1988	22.6%	19.0%	58.4%
1989	24.2%	18.9%	56.9%
1990	25.6%	20.6%	53.9%
1991	29.5%	22.7%	47.8%

1988 to 47.8% in 1991 (OPM 1992, 16-19). During this time frame, the Air Force had not implemented a “manage to payroll” policy.

A 1989 Customs Service survey conducted by OPM found that 52.4% of the supervisors disagreed with the statement, “The Personnel office has good understanding of my work unit’s operation and mission.” In the same survey 58.1% of the supervisors were dissatisfied with the availability of personnel management information (OPM 1990, App. 7-1). DOI conducted an analysis of the surveys, administered to 40% of the

workforce, during personnel management evaluation visits from 1982 to 1992. In evaluating their satisfaction with the support they received from the personnel office, over 33% of the supervisors rated all of the major personnel programs, other than benefits and awards, as unsatisfactory (DOI 1992, 66-75). In 1991, a research team from MSPB administered questionnaires and held individual and group interviews with nearly 300 randomly selected top, middle, and line managers from four Federal agencies. The objective was to gather perceptions about the delivery of personnel services. They found that fewer than two thirds of the managers gave positive responses regarding the quality of personnel services overall. Most rated the courtesy of the service as high, but only half gave positive responses for timely and efficient service (Foley 1993).

Based on the surveys conducted by OPM, DOI, and MSPB, a large percentage of federal managers are not satisfied with the quality of services provided by the personnel office. Although survey research has established that a problem exists, these agencies have not conducted empirical research to identify the probable causes of the dissatisfaction, or the types of organizational interventions that will improve the effectiveness of FPO operations. The literature pertaining to the various methods and models used to determine human resource management effectiveness provides a baseline for dealing with the research problem.

Human Resource Management Effectiveness

This section reviews the literature relating to the general approaches of evaluating human resource management, and the variety of methods and models used for assessing effectiveness.

Approaches to Evaluation

The evaluation of the effectiveness of human resource management addresses two related questions. The first seeks to determine how effectively an organization is utilizing its pool of human resources. This question focuses on the effectiveness of its overall human resources, which is influenced by top management, line management, and those in the HR function. The second question seeks to determine the effectiveness of the HR function. This question focuses on the efforts of the HR staff members. Tsui and Gomez-Mejia (1988) state that two major approaches to HRM evaluation, the audit and analytical, can be used to answer both of these questions.

The Audit Approach

The audit approach focuses on a systematic review of HR functions (classification, staffing, training, etc.) using personnel indices or user reactions. Personnel indices are useful quantitative measures that can help keep track of the impact of personnel programs. User reactions are

another way to measure HR effectiveness through the use of customer surveys. Both methods will be addressed.

Personnel indicators are widely used in both the private and public sector. The Office of Personnel Management provides all Federal agencies with a Personnel Management Indicators Report (PMIR) containing aggregate data on 46 indicators in the areas of classification, position management, performance management, staffing, and affirmative action. Agencies can use the data to determine their relative progress in meeting Federal personnel management goals or objectives. A wide variety of indicators, with data by industry and region, are readily available. This data is published by the Department of Labor, and by many “for profit” corporations. Representative indicators are shown below:

Staffing - Number of days taken to fill open requisition - Per-capita recruiting costs - Ratio of minority applicants to representation in local labor market

Equal Employment Opportunity - Minority representation by job category - Rejection rates of minority EEO category - Minority turnover rate

Salary Administration - Average pay by job category - Percentage of overtime to straight time - Ratio of average starting salary to average salary in local area.

Tsui and Gomez-Mejia mentioned 60 common indicators, the 1992 Human Resources Effectiveness Report, published by the Saratoga Institute, listed industry information on 55 indicators, and Jac Fitz-Enz's How to Measure Human Resources Management (1984) discussed 39 useful indices. When used alone, these indicators do not provide sufficient information to evaluate quality, or the overall effectiveness of any single area. However, when taken together they do contain useful information that may provide clues to the effectiveness of HR policies, programs or activities (Tsui and Gomez-Mejia 1988, 194). One criticism of this method in the public sector is that it can give a sense of objective success and an orientation to compliance or to "working the system" and fail to assess whether or not the services are meeting the customer's needs. Bowen and Greiner (1986) attribute the perceived ineffectiveness of the HR function in many organizations to a production mentality that leads HR managers to turn out uniform products basing their success on personnel indices, rather than recognizing that HR is a service organization which should match services to user needs. The user-

reaction approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the HR function recognizes its role as a service organization.

Measuring user reactions is a second alternative in the audit approach. This measurement uses techniques such as attitude surveys to ask the HR customers the extent of their satisfaction with the services they have received. HR customers include corporate executives, all levels of managers, employees, job applicants, and union officials. This method of evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of the HR staff and not the overall effectiveness of human resources in an organization. Data on user-reactions can be gathered through attitude surveys, discussions, group meetings, and interviews. Some examples of user-reaction measures follow:

Staffing - Quality of candidates referred for hiring - Fairness in the selection process - Treatment of applicants

Salary Administration - Resolution of pay problems - Employee satisfaction with pay - Fairness of job evaluation in assigning grades

Training - Communication regarding availability of training - Assistance provided in identifying training needs - Extent to which training meets the needs of the job

The audit approach has a number of strengths. The use of indices helps to quantify processes toward goals or objectives, and when taken as a whole can be used to identify problem areas. The use of user-reaction feedback has the strength of involving the clients or customers and the creation of a service oriented environment. However, the audit approach is difficult to link to organizational performance, as the clients may not be aware of the cost of service delivery, and evaluations may focus on doing things right, rather than doing the right things for the overall organization.

The Analytic Approach

The analytic approach to evaluation attempts to use the scientific method or mathematical models (Ulrich 1989). Normally this approach is designed to measure the effectiveness of a particular HR program as opposed to focusing on the HR function. The analytical approach is characterized by experimental design and cost-benefit analysis. The experimental design is normally used to assess the effects of treatments on outcomes. An example would be whether the introduction of a personnel program or practice (e.g., training, bonus, job enrichment) has the desired effect on a relevant outcome (e.g., job performance, sales, job satisfaction, absenteeism). There are a large number of experimental and quasi-experimental designs used in human resources management. The

designs vary considerably in terms of scientific rigor and data measurement. The more rigorous designs involve the measurement of outcomes before and after the new program is introduced to determine if the desired outcomes have occurred. Ideally, a control group will be used to insure that other factors than the desired intervention have not influenced the results. An example of a large scale experimental design was Air Force's Project Pacer Share, which measured the impact of changing classification and pay systems (broad-banding) at McClellan Air Force Base. A wide variety of qualitative and quantitative measures were taken at McClellan before, during and after the intervention. To enhance the rigor of the experiment, the same qualitative and quantitative measures were taken at four other comparison bases.

Other experimental research designs that are often used in HR evaluations are post hoc program effectiveness measures, before-after program effectiveness measures, before-after program effectiveness measures with control groups, and comparison of effectiveness scores for separate pilot projects taken in different parts (or at different times) of the organization (Tsui and Gomez-Mejia 1988, 194).

Several mathematical models or statistical procedures have been used to estimate the financial costs associated with HR problems (absenteeism, turnover, job performance) and the benefits that accrue

from implementing the programs designed to remedy those problems.

Three types of cost-benefit analysis are commonly used in HR evaluations. The first, human resource accounting, attempts to place a value on organizational human resources, measuring them as organizational assets. Under this type of analysis the value of returns on human resource investment (training, career development, etc.) is measured. A second measurement is that of the “dollar criterion” where the financial impact of certain types of behavior, such as job performance, absenteeism, turnover, etc. is calculated (Cascio 1982, 43). The third measurement is utility analysis which builds economic or statistical models to identify the costs and benefits associated with specific HR activities.

The cost-benefit approach has the advantage of translating HR practices into economic value, which can help identify the relative success of programs and subsequently a quantification for more efficient resource allocation. The primary problems with the cost-benefit approach are that the assumptions that underlie the economic value of activities may be subjective; indirect costs may be estimates; many programs have long term value that are difficult to quantify; and, outcomes other than cost may be important to an organization.

Models of Effectiveness

As stated earlier, the domain of HR assessment is very broad as it may focus on the HR department, specific HR practices, overall costs, or the effectiveness of the people in an organization and their productivity. The two main approaches to HR assessment (audit and analytical) include a wide variety of methods and models. Ulrich (1989) proposes a typology of models for assessing HR effectiveness. According to Ulrich, the benefit of typologies is their ability to organize diffuse literature, clarify the options between approaches for solving problems, and lay the foundation for deciding among alternatives. Ulrich identifies four criteria for creating a typology: concept (definition of HR effectiveness), assumptions (underlying view of HR), domain (focus of HR activity) and process (how to implement the approach). Using these criteria, Ulrich identifies three types of models for assessing HR effectiveness: the stakeholder model, the utility model, and the relationship model. Ulrich's typologies will be used as the baseline to summarize HR effectiveness literature and determine the "best" type of model to use to examine the major variables that influence the perceived quality of service delivered by Federal personnel offices, which is the primary purpose of this research proposal. Figure 1 - Human Resource Effectiveness Model Typologies, is a summary of Ulrich's 1989 article.

The stakeholder model focuses on the perceived value of HR services by the users, and incorporates Tsui and Gomez-Mejia's user-reaction alternative in the audit approach to assessing HR effectiveness. The utility model focuses on alternative HR practices, with effectiveness depending on the extent to which a practice improves an organization's economic gain over not using the practice. This model incorporates Tsui and Gomez-Mejia's analytical approach to assessing HR effectiveness. The relationship model focuses on HR practices with effectiveness occurring when organizational strategies have positive relationships with HR practices. This model incorporates Tsui and Gomez-Mejia's personnel indices alternative in the audit approach, but takes it one step further in an effort to make the indices meaningful in terms of organizational strategies.

Analysis of HR Effectiveness Models

The following comments summarize the literature and research concerning models of HR effectiveness. Figure 1 provides a decision framework choosing the appropriate type of model or approach to the study of the quality of services provided by FPOs. Illustrations of the models discussed below can be found in Appendix One.

Figure 1

Human Resource Effectiveness Model Typologies

	STAKEHOLDER MODEL
FOCUS	HR Department - HR Functions
ASSUMPTIONS	HR is a service function. User perceptions determine level of effectiveness.
PROCESS	1. Identify key stakeholders. 2. Prepare assessment questions. 3. Collect & analyze data. 4. Provide feedback
STRENGTHS	Emphasizes the service nature of HR. Creates joint responsibility for HR
WEAKNESSES	Results are not linked to HR costs or the organizational performance outcomes.

	UTILITY MODEL
FOCUS	HR Practices
ASSUMPTIONS	HR costs and benefits can be measured and the most cost effective alternatives improve organizational performance.
PROCESS	1. Identify HR practice. 2. List associated activities. 3. Estimate costs/benefits. 4. Create HR indices.
STRENGTHS	Focuses on value of HR practices. Translates HR practices into financial results.
WEAKNESSES	Only measures one aspect of HR effectiveness. Accurate costs are difficult to obtain.

	RELATIONSHIP MODEL
FOCUS	HR Practices
ASSUMPTIONS	HR practices help organizations achieve strategies. HR effectiveness is based on HR practices matching strategies.
PROCESS	1. Prepare a strategic model. 2. Define units of analysis. 3. Collect data on strategy, HR practice, and performance. 4. Analyze relationships. 5. Monitor results over time.
STRENGTHS	Integrates strategy, HR practices, and performance.
WEAKNESSES	Requires extensive commitment of resources to establish and monitor.

This figure summarizes material presented by Dave Ulrich in his article, "Assessing Human Resource Effectiveness: Stakeholder, Utility, and Relationship Approaches," Human Resource Planning, 12, no. 4 (1989), 301-15. (See Exhibits 1-3)

The stakeholder model makes the assumption that effectiveness of the HR department depends on the perceptions of the users, and is based on providing timely, customer oriented goods and services. Peterson and Malone's (1975) Personnel Effectiveness Grid (PEG) identifies the support of top management, the cooperation of lower level management, the qualification of the HR staff, and the quality of HR programs as the independent variables. Tsui's (1984) Tripartite Model identifies three categories of major variables, department activities, evaluation criteria, and constituents, that must be studied to determine HR department effectiveness. Biles and Schuler's (1986) Audit Model analyzes the responses of three categories of stakeholders (top executives, line managers, and HR specialists) to establish a quantitative score of HR department effectiveness. Tornow and Wiley's (1991) Action Research Model identifies the variables of leadership emphasis and employee attitudes as determining HR customer satisfaction, which is equated with HR effectiveness. When considering the stakeholder model in relation to the proposed FPO service quality research, it meets the criteria of (1) assessing the effectiveness of the overall HR department, (2) assessing the responsiveness or quality of service to users, and (3) implying a cause/effect relationship.

The utility models examine the cost of alternative HR practices in relation to the overall benefit to the organization. Recognizing that personnel costs compose approximately 57% of the total value of the goods and services produced, utility theory assumes that the lowest cost personnel practices that achieves the desired benefit level (outcome) is the most effective (Ulrich 1989, 306). Within the utility model literature there are those who identify personnel indices to use as financial cost measures (benefit assumed) and those that use models of cost and benefit to evaluate alternatives. In the first group is Rabe (1967), who identified 50 ratios, averages, and percentages used by the Fortune 100 companies to assess their HR practices. Tsui and Gomez-Mejia (1988) identified 60 representative indicators of performance, and the Saratoga Institute in conjunction with the Society for Human Resource Management (1992) issued a report that contained cost, time, and quantity data on HR practices from 500 companies in 20 industries. The intent is to use this report to establish benchmarks for assessing the relative cost of an organization's HR practice. Fitz-enz (1984) took a total quantitative approach to measuring HRM. He developed a series of metrics or formulas for measuring HR activities and their value (benefit) to organizations. Boudreau (1988) incorporated a break-even analysis to the utility model which specifies the minimum deviation in performance

from a control group for an HR activity to yield a benefit. Cascio (1987) and Boudreau (1988) use utility analysis as a decision-support framework to explicitly consider the cost and benefits of all major HR decisions. Their approach provides a way of thinking about HR decisions in that HRM programs can produce lucrative returns, as opposed to considering the HR function as a “cost center” or an “overhead budget item” (Boudreau 1988, 125). The utility model does not appear to be appropriate for the proposed research concerning the quality of FPO services. Although this approach could and perhaps should be used to analyze Federal personnel practices, it would be very difficult to apply direct and indirect costs to the independent organizational variables being considered, such as HR program design, FPO staff qualifications, and FPO staff attitudes. Placing an economic value on varying levels of customer satisfaction requires subjective assumptions that are difficult to justify.

The relationship model examines HR practices in relation to organizational strategies. The assumption is made that HR practices can help organizations implement strategic plans, therefore effectiveness occurs when there is a positive relationship between a particular HR practice and a desired and related organizational outcome (Ulrich 1989, 308). The concept that certain HR practices can influence organizational

outcomes was advanced by organizational theorists such as Burns and Stalker (1961), Lawrence and Lorsch (1969), and more recently by Nadler and Tushman (1980, 1988) in their organizational congruence model. The value of a particular practice has to be evaluated over time. The OASIS project (Organization and Strategy Information Service) developed by the University of Michigan, Hay Associates, and the Strategic Planning Institute collected data from 57 organizations to determine the relationships between organizational design, HRM practices, and various individual characteristics to organizational performance (Ulrich, Geller, and DeSouza 1984). Recently, Huselid (1994) developed a human resource management practice sophistication index (HRSOPH) to test the theory that companies with a higher index will have a positive relationship to organizational performance. The relationship approach offers a unique method of evaluating the effectiveness of various federal personnel practices; it requires the identification of organizational strategies and organizational performance over time. The relationship model goes beyond the objective of the research, and its use would not be appropriate.

The Stakeholder Model - An Appropriate Choice

In determining which approach to take in conducting the proposed research, the stakeholder model appears to be the most appropriate. The

overall focus of the stakeholder model is the HR department, which is identical to the organization of a Federal personnel office. This focus will permit the identification and testing of organizational variables. The other two models (utility and relationship) focus on specific HR practices. The assumptions of the stakeholder model and the proposed study are identical; HR is a service function and responsiveness to user needs determines effectiveness. In contrast, the assumptions of the utility model deal with the measurement of costs, and the assumptions of the relationship model are based on matching organizational strategies. The stakeholder model process of determining effectiveness corresponds with the methods to be used in the proposed research: identify the key stakeholders (managers and personnel specialists); prepare assessment questions (managerial and personnel specialist surveys); collect and analyze data; and, provide feedback (research findings). The stakeholder model, which focuses on user perceptions to determine levels of effectiveness, allows the proposed research project to utilize the body of literature and research pertaining to service quality, which also focuses on user perceptions to determine levels of effectiveness.

Service Quality Measurement

Service quality can be defined based on the criteria that the customer, client or stakeholder considers most important. If this criteria

is universal, then the research findings could apply to all service provider organizations, including personnel offices. Research conducted by Sackman (1975), Tsui and Milkovich (1986), and Tsui (1987) regarding meaningful criteria for evaluating the quality of service provided by the HR department is compared to the research conducted by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988, 1991) to create measure of service quality (SERQUAL) based on the meaningful criteria used by customers, clients, and stakeholders in a large number of service industries.

HR Department Effectiveness Criteria

Sackman (1975) used a Delphi procedure to obtain information from eight different groups of HR service users on the most meaningful criteria for evaluating its effectiveness. The study identified the following subjective criteria:

1. Cooperation from the HR department
2. Line managers opinion of the HR department's effectiveness
3. The degree to which the department is open and available
4. Trust and confidence in the HR department
5. Quickness and effectiveness of HR department responses
6. Quality of service ratings by other departments
7. Quality of information provided to top management
8. Client satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Sackman, 110)

Tsui and Milkovich (1986) conducted a similar study by using a randomly administered analytical survey of five organizations in two southeastern states. A follow on study was conducted by Tsui (1987)

using the line executives and managers in three large companies that employed a total of 113,000 persons. Both studies had a primary purpose of identifying meaningful criteria to evaluate HR department effectiveness. The following subjective criteria were identified:

A. Responsiveness criteria

1. effective response to questions
2. quality of services provided
3. quality of information provided
4. uniformity and fairness in administering policies
5. objectivity and neutrality in resolving disputes
6. responsiveness to inquiries
7. responsiveness in resolving disputes.
8. responsiveness to answering questions
9. trust and confidence in HR department
10. degree of cooperation
11. respect for the HR department
12. comparison to other HR departments
13. mutual respect between HR and other departments
14. access of HR department

B. Proactivity/Innovativeness Criteria

1. program innovation to enhance morale and allegiance
2. effective in developing a positive company image
3. teamwork between HR and line management
4. understand customer expectations
5. effective utilization of personnel resources
6. effective strategy to support organizational plans
7. effective communications
8. frequency of consultation with management
9. degree of involvement with complaints and concerns
10. effectiveness in dealing with poor performers (Tsui 1987, 61)

Service Quality Criteria

The early research by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) conducted in various service industries (banking, insurance, computer, and retail) revealed that the primary criteria utilized by customers in assessing service quality could be described by ten separate measures: (a) tangibles, (b) reliability, (c) responsiveness, (d) communication, (e) credibility, (f) security, (g) competence, (h) courtesy, (i) understanding or knowing the customer, and (j) access. These ten measures were later (1988) combined and condensed into five:

- Tangibles** - appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials
- Reliability** - performing the promised service dependably and accurately
- Responsiveness** - willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
- Assurance** - knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence, includes communication credibility, security and confidence
- Empathy** - understanding/knowing the customer, accessibility, and the caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1991, 338)

Based on their research, Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml claimed that their SERQUAL instrument, which consisted of 22-item scale pairs (expectations-perceptions), could be used to measure

perceptions of service quality in a wide variety of service industries without modification, and that the SERQUAL instrument has high reliability and validity (DeSarbo et al. 1994, 205). Recently, scholars (Carman 1990, Babakus and Boller 1992) that have used the SERQUAL instrument across different service industries have found a need to tailor the measures to the service industry being studied (DeSarbo et al. 1994, 206). When comparing the findings of Sackman, Tsui and Milkovich (HR department services) to the criteria presented by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml there are similarities, but there is also a need to tailor them as suggested by Carman, Babakus and Boller. In an effort to show the similarities between the measures of service quality (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml) and the subjective criteria for determining the effectiveness of the HR department (Sackman, Tsui, Milkovich), a cross reference is displayed at Figure 2 - Measures of Service Quality & HR Service Effectiveness Criteria.

The first measure of service quality, tangibles, was not mentioned by Sackman, or Tsui and Milkovich. The second measure, reliability, was a criterion found by Tsui and Milkovich, but not by Sackman. The other measures (responsiveness, assurance and empathy), incorporated all of Sackman's criteria and almost all of Tsui and Milkovich's. Five of Tsui and Milkovich's criteria (out of 24) were phrased so that they were HR

Figure 2

Measures of Service Quality and HR Effectiveness Criteria

MEASURES OF SERVICE QUALITY	S	T / M	HR EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA
1. Tangibles			Not mentioned
2. Reliability		A4 A5	Uniformity and fairness Objectivity and neutrality
3. Responsiveness	1 5	A6 A7 A8 A10 B3	Cooperation from HR department Quickness and effectiveness of responses Responsiveness to resolving disputes Responsiveness to answering questions Degree of cooperation Teamwork between HR department and line management
4. Assurance	2 4 6 7	A1 A2 A3 A9 A11 A12 A13 B7 B8	Line manager's opinion of HR department Trust and confidence in HR department Quality of ratings by other departments Quality of information/advice Effective response to questions Quality of service provided Quality of information provided Trust and confidence in HR department Respect for HR department Comparison to other HR departments Mutual respect between HR and other departments Effective communications Frequency of communications
5. Empathy	3 8	A14 B4 B9	The degree to which HR staff is available Client satisfaction/dissatisfaction Access to the HR department Understanding customer expectations Degree of involvement
<u>Innovation</u> (Not mentioned)		B1 B2 B5 B6 B10	Program innovation to enhance morale and allegiance Developing positive company image Utilization of personnel resources Strategy to support operational plans Dealing with poor performers

Note: The number in the columns: **(S)** Sackman; **(T/M)** Tsui & Milkovich, refer to numbered criteria listed on pages 46 and 47.

unique. These five criteria all dealt with innovation and proactivity. Although an argument could be made that these criteria could be included under one or more of the service quality measures, a considerable amount of recent literature dealing with the new roles and responsibilities for the HR department stresses the need for innovation and proactivity (Dyer and Holder 1988, 33-34). For this reason, a modification should be made for measuring the quality of HR service to include the measure of innovation.

The measures of service quality define the criteria that customers, clients, or stakeholders use to judge the effectiveness of the service. The research conducted by Sackman, Tsui and Milkovich established a set of criteria for judging the effectiveness of HR service that was compatible with the criteria used in other service industries based on the research conducted by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml. The measurement of tangibles was not mentioned as being important in the HR research. One possible explanation is that HR service is provided to “internal” customers who have the same tangibles (facilities, equipment, dress standards) as the HR department, whereas the service provided by banks, insurance companies and retailers is given to “external” customers who are not employed by the company providing the service. The measures of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are

compatible between HR and other services. The HR criteria emphasized the measure of innovation, which is closely related to the measure of empathy (understanding customer needs and individualized attention), but considered unique to HRM.

Based on the discussion of the research findings, the measures of service quality in HRM are compatible with the measures of service quality in other service industries; therefore, the assumption is made that service quality research findings and theories can be used as a baseline for examining the quality of services provided by HR departments and Federal personnel offices.

Service Quality Research

The initial efforts to define and measure quality have come from the manufacturing sector and have been based on an engineering paradigm, emphasizing conformance to standards (Garvin 1983, Crosby 1984). Recently, scholars (Gronroos 1984, 1990) (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1985, 1988, 1991) recognized that knowledge about manufacturing quality is not sufficient to fully comprehend service quality because services have four distinguishing characteristics: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability. "The intangibility of services implies that precise manufacturing specifications concerning uniform quality can be rarely set for services as they can for

goods . . . services, especially those with a high labor content, are heterogeneous: their performance often varies . . . from customer to customer, and from day to day. As a result uniform quality is difficult to ensure The inseparability of production and consumption of services implies that quality cannot be engineered and evaluated at the manufacturing plant prior to delivery to consumers. Perishability means that the goods and services cannot be saved, and this can lead to unsynchronized supply and demand problems. Clearly, goods-quality principles are not directly pertinent to services” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1992, 253). Because of these distinguishing characteristics and the need to develop valid and distinct measures of service quality, the focus has been on customers “perceptions” of service quality. Early research focused on how customers perceive service quality. Gronroos (1984) theorized that the overall perception of quality was a function of the customer’s evaluation of the service and the difference between this evaluation and his or her expectations of the service. Building on this concept, Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1985) developed a comprehensive instrument that measures service quality by calculating the difference between scores on perceptions minus scores on expectations. Using this survey instrument, they conducted a series of empirical studies to examine the organizational barriers to delivering

high-quality service performance as measured by customer perceptions and expectations. The general belief in both marketing and business is that high-quality goods and services are favored in the marketplace. Research and experience support this position (Jacobson and Aaker 1987) (Buzzell and Gayle 1987) and suggest that a positive relationship exists between high service quality and profit, cost savings and market share (Uttal 1987). Using a large database with thousands of strategic business units, PIMS (Profit Impact of Marketing Strategies) shows that the most critical factor affecting a business unit's performance is the market-perceived quality of its products and services relative to its competitors (Buzzell and Gale 1987). Although the importance of service quality has been recognized as an integral part of total quality management since the early 1980's, very little academic research has focused on conceptualizing the construct of perceived service quality and the identification of its determinants (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1992, 253). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry set out to fill this void through a series of systematic, multi-phased research projects (1985, 1988, 1991). Their research and that of other scholars, who focused on the organizational determinants of service quality perceptions, are reviewed in an effort to form a conceptual model of Federal personnel office perceived service quality that can be operationalized and tested.

Service Quality Dimensions

The service quality literature review is organized around five major organizational dimensions that have been identified as influencing perceptions of service quality. These dimensions are: service access (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry 1990, Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991), product/program design (Buzzell and Gayle 1987), staff qualifications (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991) (Ulrich, et al. 1991), staff attitudes (Schneider, et al 1980, 1985) (Reynierse 1992) (Schlesinger 1991) (Wiley 1991) (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991), and customer expectations (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991) (Boulding, et al. 1993). A brief description of these major organizational dimensions follows:

Access - A management decision relating to the accessibility of services (i.e., physical location, availability of service, methods of contact, communication)

Product/Program Design - A management decision relating to the design of the product or service and its utility and acceptability to the customer or client

Staff Qualifications - The general skill level of the service provider, which normally relates to the education, training, and experience of the individual in relation to the job (employee-job fit)

Staff Attitude - The overall climate of the work center, which is normally under the control of management and relates to service imperatives (i.e., mission, resources, service standards, empowerment) and employee views pertaining to job satisfaction, personal skills and abilities, perceptions of service quality, and the needs of the customer.

Customer Expectations - What a customer believes should transpire during a service transaction

Access

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of the concept of access, which deals with the accessibility of customer contact employees to top management and the physical accessibility (distance, method of contact) of services in relation to the customer. In their series of studies (1985, 1988, 1991), Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry examined five service companies to identify the organizational barriers to delivering high-quality service performance as measured by customer perceptions and expectations (1991). They tested a series of constructs that were hypothesized to influence service quality gaps within the provider's organization. One of the gaps examined was the difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of customer expectations. They hypothesized that this gap varies based on the extent

to which top management seeks, stimulates, and facilitates the flow of information from employees at lower levels, and to the number of managerial levels between the top management and the contact employees. They found a significant association between these variables and the gap between management understanding of customer expectations. Specifically the gap was larger in field units where too many barriers separated contact employees from managers, and too little face-to-face interaction occurred between these groups (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991, 347). This concept of access refers to the accessibility of contact employees to top management. In a related study of full service banks, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) tested the construct of physical accessibility of banking services being related to perceptions of service quality. Although many services are provided without personal contact and by telephone, the physical access (including distance, and availability of customer service personnel and tellers) was a determinate in perceptions of service quality.

Although not part of the service quality literature, a Federal government study relating to the U.S. Customs Service is applicable to the concept of access to services. In 1985, the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs Service decided to centralize all administrative functions within the agency. Personnel was one of the functions most affected by the

decision, as five regional offices were consolidated into one headquarters office. In 1989, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducted an evaluation to determine if personnel services were being conducted in an efficient and effective manner and to determine the quality, timeliness, and regulatory compliance of the service delivered. During the evaluation, OPM administered questionnaires to randomly selected employees, supervisors and managers. They received responses from 1293 employees and 293 supervisors and managers. Responses from the field were compared to responses from the headquarters (the location of the FPO) in an effort to determine if physical access to services impacted perceptions of service quality. When comparing the responses to the quality of personnel services provided by the centralized office there was not a significant difference between the two groups. The question was also asked, where do you get answers to personnel management questions? Less than 14% of the field supervisors and managers used the centralized personnel office, compared to 62% of the supervisors and managers who were co-located with the office. Upon investigation OPM determined that "shadow" personnel offices were created in field locations when the field FPOs were centralized. Field supervisors and managers were using these unauthorized shadow offices instead of the centralized office. The conclusion was reached that the

field supervisors and managers had the perception that the centralized personnel office staff did not adequately understand their work because of their isolation from field operations, therefore they did not use their services (OPM 1990, 47). This finding and that of Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1991) and Zeithaml (1990) support the premise that access may be a significant independent work center design variable influencing service quality.

Product/Program Design

Buzzell and Gayle's (1987) analysis of the PIMS (Profit Impact of Marketing Strategies) database, which contains information on thousands of business units, provided evidence that the design of a product or service program relative to those of competitors was the most critical factor affecting the effectiveness of a business unit. A study conducted by Tornow and Wiley (1991) of a multinational company, providing computer processing services to businesses, established that the design of the service program in responding to customer productivity needs was strongly correlated ($r = .86$) to customer ratings (Tornow and Wiley 1991, 108-9).

The design of the service programs that the Federal personnel office delivers is "fashioned" by Federal regulations, directives, and guidelines. An example would be the design of the staffing program

provided by FPOs in referring candidates to a supervisor for hiring consideration. Federal directives require that supervisors give hiring consideration in the following order: (1) personnel who have had their jobs eliminated, (2) internal candidates requesting lateral transfer, (3) personnel desiring promotion, and (4) private sector candidates. If the supervisor believes the best candidate for hire is from the fourth category, that candidate may be hired only if the supervisor can justify why the candidates in categories 1 - 3 are not qualified for the position. It is reasonable to assume that in this instance, the supervisor would not believe the staffing program is responsive to his or her needs and that the quality of the service received from the personnel office is low. In this instance the design of the hiring program influences the perception of service quality.

The Report of the National Performance Review, From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less (1993), led by Vice President Al Gore, focused on the restrictive nature of Federal laws, regulations, and directives. The report contained fourteen recommendations for changing Federal personnel policies and programs that would simplify the directives, provide flexibility to agencies, and delegate more authority to agencies, managers, and line supervisors. One of the key questions in this research proposal is whether or not

program design will influence the perceived quality of HRM services delivered by the personnel offices. Both service quality research and Federal demonstration projects provide valuable insight to this question.

There is a general consensus in the literature that Federal personnel programs must be redesigned (Oppenheimer and Palguta 1993, 7). Three reports from the National Academy of Public Administration, Revitalizing Federal Management: Managers and Their Overburdened Systems (1983), Modernizing Federal Classification: An Opportunity for Excellence (1991), and Leading People in Change: Empowerment, Commitment, Accountability (1993), recommended a redesign of the Federal personnel system to emphasize the characteristics of flexibility, simplicity, responsiveness, and delegation of authority. Three reports by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Federal Personnel Management Since Civil Service Reform: A Survey of Federal Personnel Officials (1989), Delegation and Decentralization: Personnel Management and Simplification Efforts in the Federal Government (1989), and Federal Personnel Offices: Time for Change? (1993), determined that to meet the needs of agencies, Federal personnel programs need to be redesigned. Simplicity, flexibility, responsiveness, and delegation of authority were recommended as the guiding concepts. These reports identified the OPM demonstration projects conducted by

the Navy, Air Force, and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) as the models for change. These agencies tested an alternative approach to compensation, performance management, and job classification at designated test installations. The alternative approach, called "broad-banding," involved consolidation of 15 Federal pay grades into three broad-bands of pay, and consolidation of 459 job classifications into ten broad job "families." This basic change allowed modifications to be made to the hiring, promotion, performance management, and utilization systems. The intent was to improve organizational performance through simplification of procedures, providing more flexibility for personnel actions, and delegating more authority to managers to control the personnel management system. The Navy project began in 1980, the NIST project 1987, and the Air Force project in 1988. The Navy, Air Force and NIST demonstration projects were recently concluded and a final evaluation was conducted. The final management report on the projects was issued in February 1993, by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. According to the author of the report, Brigitte W. Shay, the comprehensive study of the demonstration projects revealed some potential benefits and some pitfalls, but no cure-all for Federal personnel management problems (Shay 1993, 28). The final evaluation had some significant implications relating to this study.

Although the three demonstration projects implemented slightly different broad-banding programs, all three were characterized by simplified procedures and greater managerial flexibility and authority (Shay 1993, 31). As part of the data used to analyze the projects, attitude surveys were administered to employees at both test and control sites. These surveys contained questions regarding the quality of services provided by the personnel offices. At the demonstration sites, the evaluation of the quality of personnel offices services by supervisors and managers increased significantly with the implementation of the redesigned programs (OPM 1992, 15-24). This supports the premise that personnel program design does influence perceptions of service quality.

Staff Qualifications

When organizational effectiveness problems are analyzed from the standpoint of individual employees, the importance of good job performance becomes evident. Traditional organizational theory supports the view that individual job performance is a function of (1) employee abilities, traits, and interests, (2) the clarity and acceptance of the role prescriptions of the employee, and (3) the motivational level of the employee (Steers 1978, 124). Employee abilities, traits and interests represent the individual characteristics or qualifications that determine the capacity to contribute to organizational effectiveness. In a 1992

study conducted by the Merit Systems Protection Board regarding the quality of service provided by Federal personnel offices, 56% of the managers surveyed attributed the problem to the skill level of the personnel staff. Over 48% of the personnel specialists agreed with this assessment (MSPB 1992, 21).

Staff qualifications are often related to employee turnover rates and job tenure. Ulrich, Halbrook, Meder, and Stuchlik (1991) conducted a series of customer and employee attachment studies. In a study of 771 Sears stores, they found that the lower the employee turnover, the higher the customer service ratings. A similar relationship was found between part-time and full-time employees. As the ratio of full-time to part-time employees increased, the customer service ratings improved. Their explanation was that full-time employees had a greater commitment to the firm and a greater shared mind set about the goals. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) examined the relationship of employee-job fit (in particular, hiring well-qualified service employees) to service performance. They found a weak but significant relationship between the variables.

While the studies by the Merit Systems Protection Board and by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1991) do not specifically address the entire range of items that could be examined in the area of employee

qualifications, the perceptions of the Federal personnel specialists and managers mentioned in the MSPB study, suggest a relationship between employee qualifications and customer perceptions of service quality.

Staff Attitudes

Building a culture for service quality involves establishing service quality as a core organizational value (Schneider and Bowen 1985) (Berry, Zeithaml and Parasuraman 1985) (Tornow 1991) (Ulrich, Halbrook, Meder, and Thorp 1991). Earlier cited research established the need to consider both employee and customer constituencies when evaluating the effectiveness of service organizations. Research by Schneider and Bowen (1980, 1985) found strong relationships between employee and customer perceptions and attitudes in relation to service practices and quality among bank branches. Their findings supported the thesis that organizational practices and procedures that affect customer service employees are related to customers' satisfaction with the services provided. The following research focuses directly on the relationship between customer satisfaction and employee perceptions and attitudes.

Tornow and Wiley (1991) set out to replicate previous research (Schneider, Parkington, and Buxton 1980) (Schneider and Bowen 1985) which initially established relationships between employee and customer

perceptions of service in banks, using a different organizational and industrial setting. They extended the research to examine how these two perspectives relate to organizational performance. The industry studied was a major division of a multinational computer company, which provided computer processing services to businesses. The study found statistically significant ($r = .44$, $p < .01$) relationships between employee perceptions of organizational practices and procedures in relation to service (culture) and customer satisfaction with service. In a survey of employee and customer perceptions of service in banks, Reynierse and Harker (1992) found a strong positive relationship ($r = .65$, $p < .01$) between bank teller and customer service representatives views of the quality of service provided and the bank customer ratings of service quality. Using data from 200 retail stores, Wiley (1991) found that employee perceptions of their working environment (physical working conditions, minimum of obstacles to work accomplishment, management and co-worker emphasis on customer service) had a significant relationship ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) to the achievement of high customer satisfaction ratings. In their examination of the organizational barriers to perceived service quality, Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) analyzed the variables of management commitment to service quality, goal setting, task standardization, and perception of feasibility. Although

a collective positive relationship was shown between these variables and service quality, only management commitment (provision of hard resources) to service quality, and task standardization (programs for achieving service consistency) were statistically significant. All of these findings support the premise that the service quality culture of an organization, as measured by employee attitudes, is related to customer perceptions of service quality as expressed in customer satisfaction ratings.

Customer Expectations

The previous four categories of independent organizational variables (access, product/program design, staff qualifications, staff attitudes), are all on the “provider” side of service. Customer expectations are on the “receiver” side of service. In the service quality literature, perceptions of the dimensions of service quality are viewed to be a function of a customer’s prior expectations of what will and what should transpire during a service encounter, as well as the customer’s most recent contact with the delivery system. Service expectation is a norm. Exceeding the norm means that high quality service is received, and falling short of the norm means low quality is received (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991) (Boulding, et al. 1993) (Teas 1993). In the service quality literature it is difficult to gain information

regarding organizational variables pertaining to the customer, as the customers normally come from a diverse background or from a wide variety of organizations. When evaluating service quality pertaining to personnel offices services, a different situation exists. Normally the customer is a member of the same company or organization. This unique situation simplifies data gathering and analysis on organizational variables that apply only to the customer. As an example, the customers position in the organization, training for supervisory duties, and authority for making human resource management decisions could influence their expectations regarding a service encounter with the FPO.

Tsui (1987) established that the constituents' perspectives differ in both the activities desired of the personnel department and in the criteria used for evaluating its effectiveness. Department of Interior (DOI) analysis of personnel management evaluation questionnaires administered to 25,100 employees over a six year period supported Tsui's findings, and the premise that organizational variables do influence customer perceptions and expectations. The DOI analysis established two major dimensions relating to customer expectations. These were the dimensions of managerial status and managerial support. In the area of managerial status, they found that as an individual's grade and time in service increased, higher ratings were given to the personnel office. In

the area of managerial support, they found that the amount of delegated authority for managing resources and the level of training for supervisory duties influenced a manager's personnel office service ratings (DOI 1992). They also found that employees and managers who rated the effectiveness of supervisory communication as high, gave high ratings to the quality of personnel office services. Based on the DOI findings, customer expectations were subdivided into managerial status and managerial support.

Federal Personnel Service Quality Model

Service quality research and related findings in Federal personnel studies support at least six dimensions, or categories of variables that influence service quality. These dimensions are important as a means of classifying variables, and identifying constructs that can be used to operationalize or test a conceptual model of FPO service quality. As shown in Figure 3 (page 73), there are approximately twenty-three research findings associated with variables that could influence perceptions of FPO service quality. Figure 4 - A Conceptual Model of FPO Perceived Service Quality (page 75), shows the relationship of the six dimensions of predictor variables to the criterion variable of perceived service quality. The first two dimensions are organizational design variables; they are FPO access and HRM program design. The next two

variables are organizational delivery variables; they are FPO staff qualifications and FPO staff attitudes. The next two categories relate to the customer, or the Federal manager. These are managerial status and managerial support. These six dimensions will be examined for their relationship to perceived service quality. The model distinguishes between “service delivered” and “perceived service quality” as the quality of the exact same service may be perceived of differing quality by different managers based on their managerial status and the support they receive from their supervisors or managers. For each of the research findings listed at Figure 3, a construct was developed to characterize a hypothesized relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable of perceived service quality. As an example, Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990), found that in the banking industry, physical access (in terms of distance and availability of tellers and customer service personnel) was a determinate in perceptions of service quality. Based on this finding, a construct relating to proximity was identified. In other words, the proximity of the FPO to the manager was identified as a construct under the dimension of access. The construct of proximity can be operationalized and tested as a hypothesis which states; as the distance between the FPO and the manager’s place of work increases, the manager’s rating of FPO service quality decreases.

The rationale for this construct is; if the FPO is on the same installation, as opposed to another installation, the FPO staff and manager may have a closer working relationship based on personal contact and FPO staff familiarity with the manager's work environment; therefore, the manager would normally perceive the service to be of higher quality. Figure 4, the conceptual model, acts as a framework for identifying and testing of constructs or variables. The constructs supporting this framework are shown at Figure 5 - An Operational Model of Federal Personnel Office Perceived Service Quality. These constructs, which can be hypothesized, are the foundation of this research.

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature provided the research framework for the proposed study. There are two approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of human resource management. The audit approach focuses on a systematic review of HR operations using personnel indices or user reactions. The analytic approach uses scientific or mathematical models to measure the effectiveness of a particular program, as opposed measuring the entire HR operation. The approach considered the most appropriate for evaluating Federal personnel office service quality appears to be the audit approach which measures user reactions. This

provides a systematic review of the entire HR operation based on user reactions (managerial perceptions) of the service provided.

The use of models as a framework for analysis provides a useful tool for conceptualizing variables for hypothesis testing. Ulrich (1991) proposed a typology of HR models: the stakeholder, the utility, and the relationship. The utility and relationship models focus on particular HR practices, while the stakeholder model focuses on the entire HR department, the objective of the proposed research. The basic assumptions of the stakeholder model are that HR is a service function, and that user perceptions determine levels of effectiveness.

Research by Sackman (1975), Tsui and Milkovich (1986) and Tsui (1987) helped to identify the user criteria considered most important to evaluating the effectiveness of services provided by the HR department. The nature of these criteria was compatible with the measures of service quality established by Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) and generally accepted in the body of service quality research and literature. As perceptions of service quality have common evaluation criteria, the assumption is made that service quality research findings in the private sector service industries may be generalized to Federal sector personnel office services.

Service quality research and related findings in Federal personnel studies support six dimensions of service quality. These six dimensions are the basis of the conceptual model of Federal personnel office service quality (Figure 4). The service quality research findings form the basis for developing constructs to make the conceptual model operational.

Figure 3

Research Supporting Conceptual Model Variables

DIMENSION # 1 - ACCESS
1. Accessibility of services a determinate in perceptions of service quality. (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1990)
2. Separation of top management from contact employees is related to decreases in perceptions of service quality. (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml 1991)
3. U.S. Customs Service supervisors utilization of FPO services decreased based on distance - set up shadow FPOs.(OPM 1990)
DIMENSION # 2 - PRODUCT/PROGRAM DESIGN
1. The most critical factor is the market-perceived quality of the product and service relative to those of competitors. (Buzzell & Gale 1987)
2. Current civil service laws, regulations, and procedures are too complex, making them counter productive. (MSPB 1988, 1992) (NAPA 1991, 1993)
3. HRM Programs (i.e. broad-banding, and manage to budget) that emphasize flexibility, simplicity, and responsiveness result in improved perceptions of FPO services. (OPM 1992)
4. Increased responsiveness to customer productivity increases customer satisfaction ratings. (Tornow & Wiley 1991)
DIMENSION # 3 - STAFF QUALIFICATIONS
1. Perceptions of low quality service by FPOs attributed to lack of sufficient skill (education, training, experience) in the personnel staff. (MSPB 1992)
2. Employee-job fit is positively related to customer perceptions of service quality. (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml 1991)
3. As employee turnover increases and the percentage of part time vs. full time employees increase, customer service quality perceptions decrease. (Ulrich, et al. 1991)

Figure 3 - (Continued)

DIMENSION # 4 - STAFF ATTITUDES
1. Service imperatives correlate to high quality customer service. (Schneider, Parkington & Buxton 1980)
3. Higher levels of vertical and horizontal communication relate to increased levels of customer perceptions of service quality. (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml 1991)
4. Customer attitudes about service quality correlate with employee views about customer service. (Schneider, Parkington & Buxton 1980) (Schneider & Bowen 1985) (Reynierse & Harker 1992)
5. Employee perceptions of service quality are positively related to job satisfaction and self-perceived service capability. (Schlesinger 1991)
6. Employee perceptions of work environment (job authority, teamwork and customer orientation) are predictors of customer perceptions of service quality. (Wiley 1991) (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml 1991)
DIMENSIONS # 5 & 6 MANAGERIAL STATUS AND SUPPORT
1. Perceived service quality is based on the degree and direction of the discrepancy between perceptions and expectations. (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991)
2. Perceived service quality is based on prior expectations of what should and what will transpire and the actual service delivered during a service encounter. (Boulding, et al. 1993)
3. Constituency perspectives differ in both the activities desired of the HR department and effectiveness criteria. (Tsui 1987)
DIMENSION # 5 - MANAGERIAL STATUS
1. The higher the civil service grade, supervisory level, and time in service, the higher the perceived quality of FPO services. (DOI 1992)
DIMENSION # 6 - MANAGERIAL SUPPORT
1. The higher the perceptions of delegated human resource management authority, the higher the perceived quality of FPO services. (DOI 1992)
2. The higher the self perceived supervisory qualifications, the higher the perceived quality of FPO services. (DOI 1992)
3. The more effective the perceived channels of supervisory communication, the higher the perceived quality of FPO services. (DOI 1992)

Figure 4

A Conceptual Model of Federal Personnel Office (FPO)
Perceived Service Quality

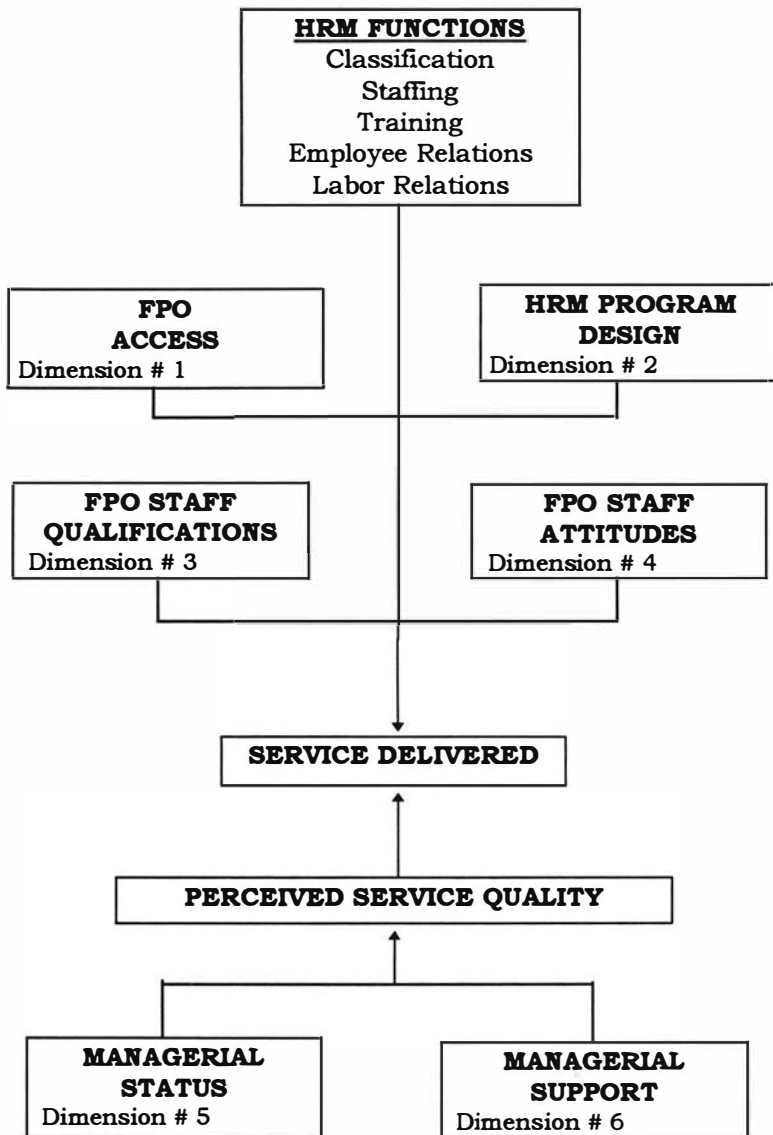


Figure 5

An Operational Model of Federal Personnel Office (FPO)
Perceived Service Quality

FPO ACCESS

Physical Access to Services

Method of Service Access

Dimension # 1

HRM PROGRAM DESIGN

Program Flexibility

Delegated Control

Responsiveness

Dimension # 2

FPO STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Education

Experience/Grade

Performance Ratings

Performance Awards

Formal Training

Employee-Job Fit

Dimension # 3

FPO STAFF ATTITUDES

Self-Perceived Skills

Perceived FPO Service Role

Perceived Service Standards

Perceived Service Quality

Dimension # 4

Job Control

Teamwork

Job Satisfaction

Communication

MANAGERIAL STATUS

Managerial Level

Supervisory Experience

Dimension # 5

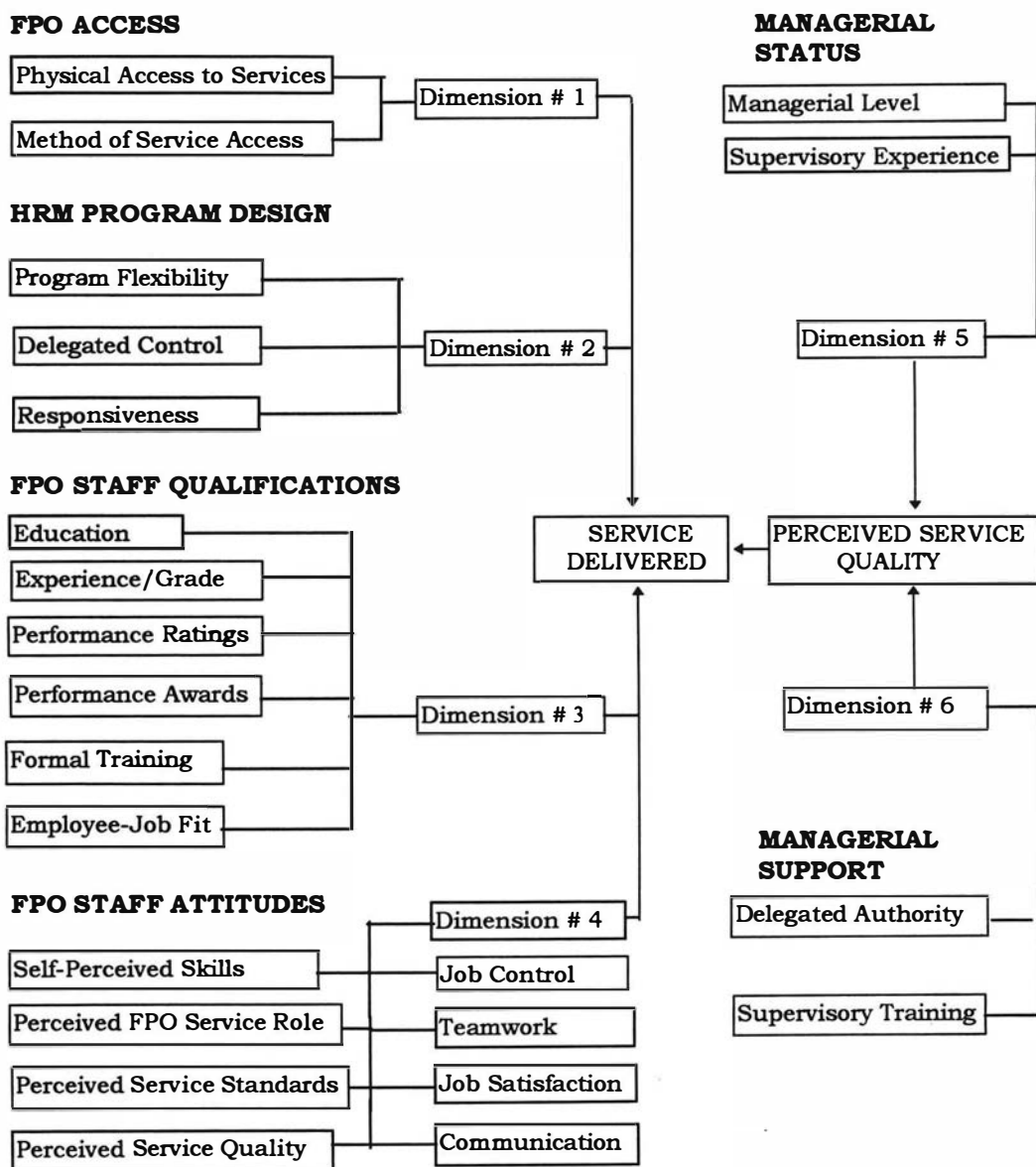
SERVICE
DELIVEREDPERCEIVED SERVICE
QUALITY

Dimension # 6

MANAGERIAL SUPPORT

Delegated Authority

Supervisory Training



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter is presented in two parts. The first discusses the research design and the second the research methodology. This chapter opens with a statement of the research objective, followed by the answers to the initial research questions which were stated in Chapter One. The answers led to a specific problem statement and a set of constructs that could be hypothesized and empirically tested. Following this, the hypotheses and basic assumptions are stated. The second part of the chapter discusses the methodological considerations, data analysis, causal inference and validity, and the limitations of the study.

The Research Objective

The general purpose of this research is to (1) develop a conceptual model of Federal personnel office (FPO) service quality based on the stakeholder approach to organizational effectiveness, focusing on the interaction between the personnel specialist and Federal manager as the primary stakeholders, (2) to empirically test the supporting constructs of

the model in a Federal setting, and (3) to identify the major organizational dimensions (predictor variables) that influence the perceived quality of services (criterion variable) provided by the personnel office. In keeping with the purpose of the study, the research objective can be stated as being able to describe how organizational variables pertaining to FPO access, HRM program design, FPO staff qualifications, FPO staff attitudes, managerial status, and managerial support relate to Federal managers' perceptions of service quality.

The General Research Questions

The general problem that this research proposal addresses is the identification of the major organizational barriers to the delivery of high-quality Federal personnel office services to federal managers. Before empirical research could begin, several general research questions had to be answered:

1. Based on previous research, which organizational dimensions have a positive relationship to perceptions of service quality?

Within the body of literature on organizational theory is the recent research on service quality. Service quality research examines data regarding the service provider and customer in an effort to gain knowledge about their interrelationships, such as how employee attitudes or management practices relate to customer satisfaction, or

how they relate to organizational financial performance. Based on this research, recent Federal test projects and Federal personnel surveys, twenty three organizational variables were identified as influencing service quality or customer satisfaction. These variables were classified into six organizational dimensions. Four organizational dimensions, FPO access, human resource management (HRM) program design, FPO staff qualifications, and FPO staff attitudes relate to actual delivery of service by the personnel office. Two organizational dimensions, managerial status and managerial support, relate to the customer and influence the perceptions of the actual service being delivered.

2. What is an appropriate conceptual model for explaining and testing the organizational dimensions that influence the perceived quality of federal personnel office services?

The use of models as a framework for analysis provides an excellent tool for conceptualizing variables for hypothesis testing. Based on the HR/personnel effectiveness literature and Ulrich's (1989) typology of HR models it was determined that the stakeholder model was the most appropriate for studying service quality. The stakeholder model focuses on HR functions, or the entire HR department. The basic assumptions of the stakeholder model are that HR is a service function and that user perceptions determine levels of effectiveness. Using this type of model as

a guide, the FPO service process was conceptualized, showing the interaction of the six organizational dimensions.

3. Based on the conceptual Federal personnel office service quality model, which organizational dimensions (variables) influence the quality of Federal personnel office service as perceived by Federal managers?

This question provides the basis for the statement of the problem and the empirical research questions relating to the specific hypotheses that will be tested in this study. The specific problem statement is: How do organizational dimensions pertaining to FPO access, HRM program design, FPO staff qualifications, FPO staff attitudes, managerial status, and managerial support influence the quality of Federal personnel office services as perceived by Federal managers?

Figure 6 - Constructs Showing Relation to Perceptions of Federal Personnel Office Service Quality, frames the statement of the problem and identifies constructs that support the six major organizational dimensions. This figure is intended to supplement the operational model and provide an overview for hypothesis construction. The figure does not provide definitions or hypothesis statements. Complete definitions are provided in Chapter One and the specific hypotheses are presented in the next section of this chapter.

Figure 6

Constructs Showing Relation to Perceptions of
Federal Personnel Office Service Quality

DIMENSION # 1 - FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICE ACCESS
1. PHYSICAL ACCESS TO SERVICES - Extent to which proximity of the personnel office to the customer influences FPO service quality ratings.
2. METHOD OF SERVICE ACCESS - Extent to which the method of contacting the personnel office (direct/indirect) influences FPO service quality ratings.
DIMENSION # 2 - HRM PROGRAM DESIGN
1. PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY/COMPLEXITY - Extent to which HRM programs with more flexibility and less complexity influence FPO service quality ratings.*
2. DELEGATED CONTROL - Extent to which HRM programs designed to decrease the control of the FPO and increase the control of the line manager influence FPO service quality ratings.*
3. PROGRAM RESPONSE TIME - Extent to which HRM programs designed to provide shorter response times to managerial requests influence FPO service quality ratings.
DIMENSION # 3 - FPO STAFF QUALIFICATIONS
1. EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE/PERFORMANCE RATINGS/PERFORMANCE AWARDS/TRAINING - Extent to which higher levels of FPO staff qualifications influence FPO service quality ratings.
2. EMPLOYEE-JOB FIT - Extent to which a closer match between employee qualifications and job requirements influences FPO service quality ratings.*
DIMENSION # 4 - FPO STAFF ATTITUDES
1. PERCEIVED SKILLS - Extent to which the overall self-perceived skills of the FPO staff influences FPO service quality ratings.
2. PERCEIVED FPO ROLE - Extent to which the perceived role of the personnel office influences FPO service quality ratings.
3. PERCEIVED SERVICE STANDARDS - Extent to which the FPO staff's perception of expected service standards influences FPO service quality ratings.
4. PERCEIVED SERVICE DELIVERY - Extent to which the staff's perception of the personnel office service being delivered influences FPO service quality ratings.
5. PERCEIVED JOB CONTROL - Extent to which the staff's perception of the degree of control they have to execute service responsibilities influences FPO service quality ratings.*
6. TEAMWORK - Extent to which the staff's perception of the level of teamwork in the FPO influences FPO service quality ratings.*
7. COMMUNICATION - Extent to which the FPO staff's perception of effective levels of vertical and horizontal communication within the FPO influences FPO service quality ratings.*
8. JOB SATISFACTION - Extent to which the FPO staff's level of job satisfaction influences FPO service quality ratings.*

Figure 6 - (Continued)

DIMENSION # 5 - MANAGERIAL QUALIFICATIONS
1. STATUS - Extent to which an individual's level of management responsibility, grade, rank, and hierarchical position influence FPO service quality ratings.
2. EXPERIENCE - Extent to which years of experience as a supervisor influence FPO service quality ratings.
DIMENSION # 6 - MANAGERIAL SUPPORT
1. AUTHORITY - Extent to which a manager's perception of delegated authority for human resource management actions influences FPO service quality ratings.
2. SUPERVISORY TRAINING - Extent to which management has prepared the individual for supervisory responsibilities influences FPO service quality ratings.
* These constructs were not tested in this study, and are not listed as hypotheses. As secondary data was used, the survey instruments did not contain questions to properly evaluate all relationships, and the organizations selected for the survey did not have the range of variation in HRM program design.

The Hypotheses

This section is organized according to the major organizational dimensions identified in the statement of the problem. The pertinent sub-research question associated with each organizational dimension is stated, followed by a statement of the alternative hypothesis. The null hypotheses that will be tested to answer the sub-research questions are listed at Figure 7. The rationale supporting each sub-research question and alternative hypothesis is also provided.

FPO Access

Does FPO accessibility influence the Federal manager's perception of the quality of services provided?

Hypothesis # 1. As the physical distance between the FPO and the Federal manager's place of work increases, the Federal managers' rating of FPO services decreases.

Rationale: The current trend in the Federal government is to consolidate and regionalize Federal personnel operations. Rather than having the personnel office located on the same installation as the manger, they will receive their service from a consolidated office located in another state. Most services will be provided over the telephone, by electronic mail, and through networked computer systems. The 1990 OPM study of the consolidation of FPO services in the U. S. Customs Service indicated that managers did not differentiate service quality based on distance, but the validity of the finding was questionable based on the creation of "shadow" FPOs to provide services to managers who did not have an FPO on their installation. This hypothesis reexamines the issue of quality and distance. If physical distance between the personnel office and the manager's work place is a factor that influences the quality of service, then the current trend of consolidation may work against improving FPO service quality.

Hypothesis # 2. As direct personal contact between Federal mangers and personal specialists increases (for obtaining services), the manager's rating of FPO services will increase.

Rationale: Federal managers often use a subordinate (secretary) or their administrative staff to deal with the FPO staff. If personal contact in obtaining FPO services is not a factor, then providing services by other means (electronic, mail, etc.) should not influence perceptions of service quality. The 1990 OPM study of centralization of FPO services in the U.S. Customs Service implies a preference for personal contact (face to face). This hypothesis examines the implication.

HRM Program Design

Does the design of the HRM program associated with the services being delivered by the FPO influence the Federal managers perceptions of service quality?

Hypothesis # 3. FPOs with higher levels of HRM program responsiveness will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Rationale: The literature review shows that managers want HRM programs that are characterized by flexibility, simplicity, delegated authority, and responsiveness. Federal personnel demonstration projects tested these types of programs during the “broad-banding” study and found that managerial ratings of FPO services increased (OPM 1992). During this study the only HRM program design variable that could be

tested was that of program responsiveness. The demonstration organizations were not included in the survey.

FPO Staff Qualifications

Does the overall level of FPO staff qualifications influence the quality of Federal personnel office services as perceived by Federal managers?

Hypothesis # 4. FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist education will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Rationale: The Merit Systems Protection Board study of FPOs (1993) indicated that 56% of the Federal managers believed the lack of sufficient skill in the personnel staff was a primary reason for low quality personnel services (MSPB 1993, 21). Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 test this perception.

Hypothesis # 5. FPOs with higher grade levels will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Hypothesis # 6. FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist performance ratings will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Hypothesis # 7. FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist performance awards will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Hypothesis # 8. FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist formal training will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

FPO Staff Attitudes

Do FPO staff attitudes influence the quality of FPO services as perceived by Federal managers? Attitude relates to the service culture or service attitudes of the personnel specialists in a FPO.

Hypothesis # 9. FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist self-perceived skills will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Rationale: The skills required to provide quality service may not be dependent on the traditional factors of formal education, years of experience, performance ratings, and formal training. For this reason, a more accurate predictor of high-quality service may be the staff's self-perception of their ability to provide this level of service. The MSPB study of FPOs (1993) indicated that 33% of the personnel specialists believed they had sufficient skills to provide excellent service, 57% indicated that there was a lot they did not know, and 9% stated that they overwhelmed by their jobs.

Hypothesis # 10. FPOs with higher levels of agreement on FPO' roles oriented toward helping managers will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Rationale: Service imperatives correlate to high quality customer service (Schneider, et al. 1980) How personnel specialists perceive the role of the personnel office may guide their response to service encounters. The personnel specialists who believe the role of the personnel office is to help managers and promote efficiency through effective human resources management may place a higher priority on the needs of managers than those personnel specialists who believe the role of the personnel office is to insure compliance with laws and regulations or to protect the rights of employees. This priority may be reflected in managers' rating of FPO service.

Hypothesis # 11. FPOs with higher levels of staff agreement on service responsiveness (time to fill vacancies and classify positions) will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Rationale: Service quality research stresses knowing the customers' needs and expectations (Schneider et al. 1980). Federal manager surveys have indicated that it takes too long to fill vacancies and classify positions. It is reasonable to assume that personnel specialists who believe positions should be filled in less than 30 days, or positions classified within two weeks, would be more responsive to manager's needs than personnel specialists who believe that three months is a reasonable time to fill or classify positions.

Hypothesis # 12. FPOs with higher levels of perceived service quality by the personnel specialists will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Rationale: The literature shows a strong positive relationship between employee perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction (Schlesinger 1991). The 1993 MSPB study showed a collective disparity between personnel specialists perceptions of service quality and that of managers. This hypothesis explores the relationship by comparing personnel offices.

Managerial Status (Customer Expectations)

Does the status (management level, experience) of the individual manager influence their perception of service quality?

Hypothesis # 13. Federal managers with higher levels of management responsibility will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Hypothesis # 14. Federal managers with higher levels of supervisory/management experience will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Rationale: The Department of Interior (DOI 1993) analysis of personnel office ratings showed that FPO service ratings varied based on individual status. It is possible that personnel office service varies based on the individual's organizational status, but it is also possible that

individuals with higher levels of responsibility, grade, and position have more experience in managing employees and have different service expectations.

Managerial Support (Customer Expectations)

Does the level of top management support (delegated authority, supervisory preparation) provided to managers influence their perceptions of service quality?

Hypothesis # 15. Federal managers with higher levels of delegated authority for human resource management will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Rationale: The literature supports delegation of proper levels of authority to improve organizational effectiveness (NAPA 1993, 15). It is possible that when managers have full authority to manage their human resources there is a more favorable and cooperative service encounter with the personnel staff. If a manager does not have the necessary decision authority, his/her role might change to that of “intermediary” between the HR staff and the managers immediate supervisor. The difference in these two roles may influence the managers perception of the quality of service being provided.

Hypothesis # 16. Federal managers receiving higher levels of preparation for supervisory responsibility will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Rationale: The 1992 DOI analysis of survey data indicated that the higher the self-perceived supervisory qualifications, the higher the perceived quality of FPO services. Organizational supervisory training includes instruction on specific supervisory responsibilities and information on the services provided by personnel offices. Normally, the training is provided by the same individuals that the supervisor needs to contact for HRM support. It is reasonable to assume that this preparation will aid the supervisor in resolving HRM problems and influence service expectations.

Assumptions

The following comments summarize the key assumptions that were made in the design of this empirical research. The assumptions pertain to the need for a new conceptual model, how to quantify perceptions of service quality, that personnel is a service activity, and that the stakeholder model is the appropriate choice for this study. The foundation for each of the following assumptions is based on the literature review:

Federal Personnel Office Service Quality Model - The

assumption was made based on the review of Federal personnel and service quality research, that a new conceptual model of effectiveness was needed to identify the organizational barriers to service quality in the Federal sector. The existing models mentioned in the literature review (Peterson and Malone 1975, Tsui 1984, Biles and Schuler 1986, Tornow and Wiley 1991) include customer perceptions as one measure of effectiveness; they do not identify organizational variables that could influence the levels of customer perceptions (See Appendix One). The FPO conceptual model adds this perspective.

Perceptions of Service Quality - The assumption is made that Federal managers' ratings of personnel office services on a survey questionnaire equates to their perception of service quality, and that the criteria for their ratings were based on the dimensions similar to those established by the research findings of Sackman (1975), Tsui (1987), and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). The assumption is also made that the same criteria is used to rate all services provided by the FPO (i.e. staffing, classification, employee relations).

Service Quality Effectiveness - The subjective criteria used for determining HRM effectiveness are compatible with the subjective criteria used to evaluate service quality in the private sector service industries. Therefore the assumption is made that service quality theory and research findings can apply to services provided by FPOs.

Stakeholder Model - The use of this model assumes that the primary function of the FPO is that of providing services, and that user perceptions can determine levels of effectiveness.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The research design is based on the stakeholder model of assessing human resource management effectiveness, as defined by Ulrich (1989). This type of model assumes that HR is a service function, and that user perceptions can determine the level of effectiveness. The general process of this type of model is to identify the key stakeholders, prepare an assessment questionnaire, collect and analyze data, and then provide feedback. Based on the knowledge gained from service quality research, theory, and the results of Federal personnel management studies, a stakeholder model of FPO Perceived Quality was developed. Six categories of major organizational variables were identified and a set of operational constructs were created that were representative of each

category of variable. These constructs were then hypothesized so that they could be tested.

The design of this study is based on using analytical sample survey data, gathered from questionnaires randomly administered to personnel specialists in six Federal organizations, to establish relationships between variables. The objective of the design is a description of whether and how the various organizational predictor variables relate the criterion variable of perceived service quality. While this design will not test for causation, it will establish relationships that can be used to offer potential explanations and establish plausible arguments to guide practice. The use of analytical surveys to index variable associations is an excellent research design providing the issues of construct validity of measures, statistical conclusion validity, and internal validity receive the proper attention (Schmitt and Klimoski 1991) (Bordens and Abbot 1991) (Babbie 1989). Based on the pattern of association and correlation between the variables, potential explanations will be offered, and recommendations will be made as to the types of interventions that can be made to improve organizational effectiveness based on the criteria of managerial service quality perceptions.

Methodological Considerations

The Federal Government employs approximately 185,000 civilian supervisors and an equivalent number of military officers who supervise both military and civilian personnel to manage the civilian workforce. To assist these supervisors and managers there are 1,400 Federal personnel offices, with 36,000 employees (MSPB 1993, vii). While this large population offers many opportunities for testing, the procedures involved in gaining approval for a multi-agency survey, and the costs involved with administering such a survey led the investigator to search for existing data that would support the research design. Federal oversight agencies such as MSPB and OPM conduct special studies, which include surveys, to evaluate the effectiveness of personnel management programs. In addition, the various Federal departments (Defense, Interior, Transportation, etc.) conduct surveys on a wide variety of personnel management subjects, including the effectiveness of personnel office operations. The results of many of these surveys were mentioned in the literature review and used to support the development of the FPO Service Quality Model. After reviewing a large number of surveys, two surveys used by MSPB in their 1993 report on FPOs were selected as the most appropriate instruments for this research design.

Sampling Procedures

The MSPB originally used the surveys to gather descriptive data on personnel specialist and manager perceptions regarding FPO effectiveness. The surveys collected demographic data on the participants and identified the FPOs being rated. This allowed the research design to include two different units of analysis based on individual and organizational responses. The MSPB selected four Federal agencies for the study that were reflective of the organizational diversity found in the Government. Consideration was given to the size (large vs. small) and the mission (military vs. civilian) of the agency, as well as the operating environment (headquarters vs. field).

Two military and two nonmilitary agencies were selected. The military agencies selected were the Defense Logistics Agency and the Forces Command of the Department of the Army. The nonmilitary agencies selected were the National Park Service of the Department of Interior, and the Centers for Disease Control of the U.S. Public Health Service. Within these four agencies, the operation of six FPOs were examined. The MSPB developed two questionnaires, one for managers (first and second-line supervisors and middle-managers) and one for personnel specialists. The questionnaires were personally administered by the MSPB in June 1991 in a small group format. The MSPB

evaluators gave each participant a questionnaire, explained the purpose of the survey, assured them of anonymity, read the instructions, and then allowed them to complete the questionnaire. After completion of the questionnaires, the participants were encouraged to elaborate upon their experiences and perceptions in group interviews. Managers and personnel specialists were in separate groups. A total of 72 personnel specialists and 269 managers completed the questionnaires. Because of the method of selection and administration, a (94%) response rate was achieved. Non-respondents were those who did not report for the scheduled group sessions due to illness or administrative reasons. After the participants completed their questionnaires, they were invited to participate in group sessions to elaborate upon their responses and to share their experiences, perceptions, or recommendations.

The sample size of 72 personnel specialists represented approximately 33% of the population of personnel specialists working in the six personnel offices. A systematic sampling technique was used to select the participants. A listing of personnel specialists, defined as non-supervisory personnel who provide direct delivery of service to managers, was prepared for each installation, and using a random start, every third name was selected. The sample size of 269 managers represents a stratified random sample, based on a listing of managers prepared by

each of the agency personnel offices. From these lists agencies randomly selected participants, with the sample size representing approximately 15% of the population of managers at each installation. The sampling process yielded 341 responses, an amount large enough for confidence in the statistical analyses to be performed.

Table 3
Number and Type of Participants From Each Study Installation

	Defense Logistics Agency	Army Forces Command	National Park Service	Centers for Disease Control	TOTAL
Managers Participating	78	61	62	68	269
Manager Population	486	388	392	427	1693
FPO Staff Participating	27	13	19	13	72
FPO Staff Population	81	41	57	39	218
Total Number Participants	105	74	81	71	341

Instrumentation

The questionnaires used in the MSPB study, "The Role of the Federal Personnel Office," are at Appendices Two and Three. The questionnaire for personnel specialists contained 24 questions. The first

9 questions collected demographic data relating to their job, education, experience, performance ratings, recognition, and government sponsored training. The next 11 questions collected information on their perceptions of the role of the personnel office, managers' expectations, their ability to deliver service, and FPO strengths and weaknesses. The final four questions were open ended and were not quantified for use in this study. The questionnaire for managers and supervisors contained 25 questions. Seven of the questions collected data pertaining to organizational status, supervisory experience, training, and delegation of authority for managing human resources. Two questions related to personnel office and service access. Eleven questions gathered data on their perceived role of the personnel office, expected and experienced levels of service, possible causes of service problems, and service quality ratings. Five questions were open-ended and were not quantified for use in this study. In both questionnaires, the open-ended questions were used by the MSPB to obtain unanticipated responses, obtain answers that might reflect the true views of respondents, and to validate responses to closed ended question responses. The closed-end questions were structured to provide ordinal data, usually on a five point scale. Prior to administering the survey in May, 1991, the MSPB Office of Policy and Evaluation pre-tested the questionnaire in the Washington, D.C.

area, using managers and personnel specialists from several Federal agencies. Following pretest interviews with the respondents, adjustments were made regarding procedures, format, and question structure.

The MSPB questionnaires provided the opportunity to test all six categories of predictor variables essential to the proposed study. Of the twenty three variables identified in the literature review and FPO Service Quality Model, sixteen were tested. A summary of the questions relating to the major categories of variables are shown in the following table:

Table 4

FPO Service Quality Model Variables and MSPB Questions

FPO MODEL VARIABLE	PERSONNEL SURVEY	MANAGER SURVEY
FPO Access		2
HRM Program Design		2
FPO Staff Qualifications	8	2
FPO Staff Attitudes	6	2
Managerial Status		4
Managerial Support		4
Service Quality	2	2

Data Analysis

The purpose of this research is to examine the association between a set of predictor variables and the criterion variable of perceived service

quality. The data obtained from the surveys is at the ordinal level, meaning that the values of each variable could be arranged in a meaningful order. A bivariate data analysis strategy was used employing nonparametric methods to test each hypothesis. Null hypotheses were tested using the Pearson chi-square test of independence and the significance of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. Goodman and Kruskal's gamma, Spearman's correlation coefficient, and Pearson's partial correlation coefficient were used to quantify the degree of association between the predictor and criterion variables.

Crosstabulations, or Contingency tables, are the primary method used by researchers to examine relationships between variables at the ordinal and nominal level (Meier and Brudney 1993, 208). Examination of the various row and column percentages provided a useful first step in studying the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. In Chapter Four, crosstabulations are presented for each of the sixteen hypotheses. Pearson's chi-square test of independence was used to evaluate the level of statistical significance attained by the bivariate relationships in the cross tabulations. The chi-square test procedure assumes that there is no relationship between the two variables in the population and determines whether any apparent relationship obtained in a sample crosstabulation is attributable to chance. The hypothesis

that two variables of a crosstabulation are independent of each other is of general interest to most researchers (Norusis 1993, 206). Almost all of the Federal personnel studies examined in the literature review displayed their findings in crosstabulation format. To provide a direct comparison between this study and the Federal personnel studies, the study results are displayed in the same format. The chi-square test of independence was chosen as the initial test of the hypotheses for the following reasons:

- a) It is an appropriate test for both nominal and ordinal levels of data (Norusis 1993, 215).
- b) It is the most widely used and understood test of significance based on crosstabulation (Blalock 1979, 279), which is an important consideration as the study results are intended for the use of general practitioners.
- c) The method of calculating the significance level is different from the method used in correlation analysis and this difference provided valuable insight into variable relationships.

The chi-square test does not test the strength of relationship or the substantive importance of empirical relationships; it only provides information on the probability of the existence of a relationship. For this reason the chi-square test was used in combination with other statistical

procedures. Two ordinal measures were used. The first measure, Goodman and Kruskal's gamma, was used to assess the strength of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables of each hypothesis based on the crosstabulation used for the chi-square analysis. Gamma is based on the concept of paired observations. A concordant pair of observations demonstrates support a positive relationship (e. g., an alternative hypothesis that indicates close proximity to the FPO will result in high perceptions of service quality) and a discordant pair of observations supports a negative relationship (e.g. close proximity to the FPO and low perceptions of service quality). Gamma takes the difference between the number of concordant or consistently ordered pairs and the number of discordant or inconsistently ordered pairs in the crosstabulation. The difference indicates the relative support in the contingency table for a positive as opposed to a negative relationship between the variables. The value of gamma was used to determine the strength of variable association, to evaluate the alternative hypotheses, and to compare the relative strength of the sixteen predictor variables in relation to the criterion variable.

Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was the second ordinal measure of association used in the analysis of the data. A common objective of behavioral research is to establish that a correlation

exists between two variables. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient met this objective and was particularly appropriate for this study as the variable values could be ranked in two ordered series. The Spearman statistic ranks the values of each of the variables from the smallest to the largest and then computes the Pearson correlation coefficient on the ranks. As with the value of gamma, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to evaluate the alternative hypotheses and to compare the strength of association between the sixteen predictor variables and the criterion variable. In addition to providing this information, the significance of the correlation coefficient was used to test the null hypotheses. The second test of the null hypothesis was necessary to indicate the confidence level that an observed correlation is greater than .00. The primary emphasis in null hypothesis testing was given to the significance level of the correlation coefficient because of the limitations of the chi-square values. Chi-square is markedly inflated and sensitive to sample size, therefore the significance test is not very discriminating (Meier and Brudney 1993, 228). Both tests were valuable in providing insight into variable relationships.

The level of significance for rejecting the null hypothesis was established in advance of the data analysis at .05. As this is a base line study, the investigator was willing to tolerate a probability of 5% that an

incorrect inference would be made that a relationship exists, when in fact it does not. Based on the subjective nature of the predictor variables, lower significance levels (.01 or .001) would be too stringent and could lead to the acceptance of a null hypothesis, when in fact it should be pursued. Although some justification could exist for rejecting a null hypothesis with a higher significance level (e. g. .10), the .05 level was established as it is the highest level generally acceptable in behavioral research (Kerlinger 1986, 157).

The final step in the data analysis was partial correlation analysis. Any association that exists between two variables may be due to one or more other factors or variables. To deal with this situation, their influence can be eliminated by computing a partial correlation measure (Gibbons 1976, Reynolds 1977). The partial correlation describes the relationship between the other two variables when the third (or more) variable is held constant. Each predictor variable was examined while statistically controlling for the effects of all other predictor variables. A zero-order matrix of simple correlation between all variables was also calculated. The intent was to uncover spurious relationships.

The data analysis plan involved the use of several statistical methods. Each statistical test provided a different and valuable insight into the association between the variables. The following figure

summarizes the steps that were taken in analyzing the survey data in relation to the variables. The null hypothesis is stated in abbreviated form in the first column, followed by the predictor and criterion variables to be measured, and the survey questions used for data gathering. The final column indicates the statistical procedures used for analysis.

Figure 7

Data Analysis Plan Summarized by Null Hypothesis

NULL HYPOTHESIS	PREDICTOR VARIABLES	CRITERION VARIABLE	STATISTICAL PROCEDURES
1. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO services and their work location.	Question 8 (Manager's Survey) Proximity of FPO to managers (Four categories) Ordinal Data	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
2. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO services and their method of contact.	Question 7 (Manager's Survey) How FPO contacts are made (Four categories) Ordinal Data	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
3. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO services and levels of HRM program responsiveness.	Question 17B (Manager's Survey) Time taken for FPO to classify jobs. (Five time options) - Ordinal Data	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
4. There is no relationship between managerial service ratings of FPOs and the level of FPO staff education.	Question 3 (Personnel Specialists' Survey) Highest level of education. (five categories) Ordinal Data	FPO rank order based on manager's service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation

Figure 7 - (Continued)

NULL HYPOTHESIS	PREDICTOR VARIABLES	CRITERION VARIABLE	STATISTICAL PROCEDURES
5. There is no relationship between managerial service ratings of FPOs and FPO staff grade levels.	Question 1 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) Grade level. (five categories) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
6. There is no relationship between managerial service ratings of FPOs and the level of FPO staff performance ratings.	Question 6 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) Last three year's summary performance appraisal ratings. (four categories) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
7. There is no relationship between managerial service ratings of FPOs and the level of FPO staff performance awards.	Question 7 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) Awards for achievement and performance in last three years. (Five categories) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
8. There is no relationship between managerial service ratings of FPOs and the level of FPO staff formal training.	Question 8 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) Government sponsored training in last five years. (Five categories) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
9. There is no relationship between managers' service ratings of FPOs and the level of FPO staff self-perceived skills.	Question 14 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) Extent you know enough to provide excellent service. (Three categories) Ordinal data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation

Figure 7 - (Continued)

NULL HYPOTHESIS	PREDICTOR VARIABLES	CRITERION VARIABLE	STATISTICAL PROCEDURES
10. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO services and FPO staff perceptions of service roles.	Question 10 (Personnel Specialists' Survey) Agreement on FPO roles. (Four roles and five levels of agreement) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
11. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO services and FPO staff perceptions of service response time.	Question 19 & 20 (Personnel Specialists' Survey) Reasonable time to fill vacancies and classify positions. (Five categories) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
12. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO services and FPO staff perception of the level of service quality provided.	Question 12 (Personnel Specialists' Survey) How well do they believe that the FPO is helping (Five categories) Ordinal Data.	FPO rank order based on managers' service quality ratings. (Top Third, Middle Third, Bottom Third) Ordinal Data.	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
13. There is no relationship between managers' ratings of FPO Services and level of management responsibility.	Question 1 (Manager's Survey) Level of management responsibility (Three categories) Nominal Data	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
14. There is no relationship between managers' rating of FPO Services and levels of mgmt experience.	Question 4 (Manager's Survey) Years as a manager (Five categories) Ordinal Data	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation
15. There is no relationship between managers' rating of FPO Services and managers' level of delegated authority for managing HR.	Question 6 (Manager's Survey) Amount of delegated authority for managing HR. (Two categories) Nominal Data.	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation

Figure 7 - (Continued)

NULL HYPOTHESIS	PREDICTOR VARIABLES	CRITERION VARIABLE	STATISTICAL PROCEDURES
16. There is no relationship between managers' rating of FPO Services the level of supervisory training.	Question 9 & 10 (Manager's Survey) Amount of pre and post-supervisory training. (Ordinal Data)	Question 20 (Manager's Survey) FPO service quality ratings. - Ordinal Data	- Chi-Square Analysis - Gamma - Spearman Correlation - Partial Correlation

Causal Inference and Validity

This section will discuss the goal of causal inference and address the construct, statistical conclusion, internal, and external validity of the study. As discussed earlier, this study used survey research data to investigate the relationships between variables. A goal of this study was to provide a reasonable basis for a cause and effect relationship, that could serve as a key factor in organizational decision making. However, it is important to emphasize that the study design only provides indirect evidence for the cause and effect relationships. Because of the broad nature of this study, there are many alternative explanations for the results. Keeping this in mind, the design of the study has taken four types of threats to validity into consideration.

Construct Validity

The notion of construct validity deals with the extent to which a particular measure is a valid indicator of the variable in which we are

interested. The broad scope of this study and the question of feasibility led to the use of a limited number of constructs for each major category of organizational variables. Because of this limitation, inferences can be made only on the specific constructs tested and not the generalized categories of organizational variables, termed organizational dimensions. The general categories of organizational variables are to be used only as a frame of reference. The specific constructs developed are based on relationships established in other studies. The validity of the specific constructs examined in this study are enhanced by several factors. The techniques used by the MSPB of having "open ended" questions relating to previously asked quantitative questions, and by inviting participants to elaborate upon their responses to questions in group sessions, enhanced construct validity by creating conditions of replicability (similar results in a different setting), qualitative depth (the why of answers), and quantification (objective comparisons across individuals and organizations).

Statistical Conclusion Validity

This study was conducted to determine the magnitude of the relationship between variables. A concern is the extent to which the outcomes are influenced by forces that would promote instability, unreliability, or sources of error variance. Relevant factors are the

reliability of measurement, the reliability of the treatment, and sample size (Schmitt and Klimoski 1991). In this study, reliability of measurement pertains to the degree that our measures of perceived service quality will provide the same values when questions are repeated. In the questionnaire, equivalent questions were included so that a correlation coefficient (reliability coefficient) could be calculated. The reliability coefficient on key questions ranged from $r = .56$ to $r = .61$. Reliability of treatment pertains to the manner in which a variable gets “delivered.” This is usually a problem in large studies or those conducted over a long period of time. This is not considered a threat as the MSPB survey was relatively small (340 respondents) and the entire study was conducted within 30 days. The third factor is that of sample size. The size of the sample selected by the MSPB was based on a combination of criteria including the efficient sampling size for a .05 confidence level, the design of the sample (stratification vs. simple random sampling), the need for sub-population analysis (varying managerial demographics), and credibility (using 1/3 of personnel specialist population). These concerns were compatible with the concerns of the research and minimized the threat of randomness in the data.

Internal Validity

In the proposed research, the threats to internal validity are focused on a specific set of plausible rival hypotheses for the pattern of results obtained from the survey data. The design of the study dealt with many of the threats to internal validity identified by Cook and Campbell (1976). A discussion of several of these threats follows:

Selection of Participants - The random selection of participants within selected groups, and the identification of groups that are representative of the diverse nature of Federal organizations minimized the possibility that participants had unique experiences, views, or qualifications.

Testing - Participants were not subject to any pre-survey measures or discussions prior to the administration of the survey by the MSPB evaluators which might have sensitized or changed their responses.

Instrumentation - The same questionnaires and administrative procedures were used throughout the MSPB study, minimizing the threats based on obtaining non-equivalent measures.

Statistical Regression - This threat refers to a tendency for scores, upon re-measurement, to change in the direction of the mean. This would have been a threat if the organizations participating in the study were selected based on some factor such as a reputation for FPO service excellence. Although group selection was not random, it was based on

representativeness, rather than any variable being examined in the study. As stated previously, two military and two non-military agencies were selected. Within these four agencies consideration was given to size (large and small) and the operating environment (headquarters and field).

History, Maturation, and Mortality - Because the MSPB study was conducted within 30 days, these threats were not present.

External Validity

In the proposed research, there are several threats to external validity or the ability to generalize the findings. These threats stem from the nature of the sample, the variables being measured and the research setting (Cook and Campbell, 1976). A brief discussion of these threats follows:

The interaction of selection and treatment - For this study, the problem is one of selection. If the groups or organizations were randomly selected, instead of being selected based on representativeness, the threat would have been minimized. It is possible that the same relationship between variables will not be established if the study was replicated in other organizations. The study design of basing constructs and hypotheses on previous research and using a random selection of participants helps to minimize this threat, but does not eliminate it.

The interaction of setting and treatment - For this study, the threat would be that the relationship between variables is the result of a particular setting. This threat was minimized by MSPB selection of the six different types of settings, representative of those found in the Federal Government.

The interaction of treatments - For this study, the threat refers to the possibility that the established relationship between variables may be unique and actually dependent on a particular combination of factors. This could be a threat because of the large number of variables being examined and their possible intercorrelation. The threat was carefully examined and dealt with through statistical analysis.

Limitations of the Study

This study has three general categories of limitations. The first pertains to the number of constructs tested to support the conceptual model of FPO service quality. The second involves the use of secondary data to support the research. The third category involves generalizability. A discussion of these limitations follows.

The conceptual model of FPO service quality indicates that there are six categories of organizational variables that influence service quality. Although the identification of these categories was based on the literature review, subjective judgment was used for the definition and

inclusion of the supporting constructs. The use of a larger or smaller number of categories could be easily justified. The model must be viewed only as a frame of reference for conducting the research. Of critical interest are the supporting constructs. In an effort to limit the scope of this study, the only constructs examined were those that could be directly related to previous research findings. The subjective nature of the identification of organizational dimensions and the selection of variables to test was not considered a limitation that was detrimental to the research. This would have been a serious limitation if the goal of the study was to establish a direct cause and effect relationship between specific independent variables and perceptions of service quality. A final limitation relating to the model is the definition of the customer. Only supervisors and managers were treated as the “customers” of the personnel office services, when in fact general non-supervisory employees were also recipients of the services. This was an intentional study design limitation as supervisors and managers are generally accepted as the primary stakeholders in personnel management services. The investigator recognizes that non-supervisory employees may have a different basis for perceptions of service quality than supervisors and managers. This is a limitation that must be considered by Federal

agencies before implementing organizational interventions to improve service quality.

The second category of limitations to the study involves the use of secondary data to support the research. The use of secondary data collected for other than the specific research can introduce unknown biases and limit the desired scope of the study. The investigator conferred with the MSPB personnel responsible for the development and administration of the survey, and the evaluation of the survey data in an effort to identify biases that would limit the proposed research. It was generally agreed that the MSPB survey data would be appropriate for this study.

/ The third category of limitations involve generalization. To be able to generalize the findings of this research to all Federal agencies, the organizations should have been selected by a random process. The groups were selected based on their representativeness of Federal organizations, which means that the results of the study can be generalized only to the study population and not to all Federal organizations.

Chapter Summary

The general research question that this study addresses is how to improve managerial perceptions of the quality of service provided by

FPOs. The assumption was made that certain organizational variables influence service quality perceptions. To investigate this question a stakeholder model of assessing HRM effectiveness was used. This model assumes that HR is a service function and that user perceptions can determine the level of effectiveness. Using the knowledge gained from service quality research and theory, and from Federal personnel studies, a conceptual model of Federal personnel service quality was developed along with constructs that could be operationalized and tested. A total of sixteen constructs were hypothesized and tested using data from MSPB surveys conducted in 1991 to determine perceptions of the role of the personnel office and the quality of the services provided. Organizational variables pertaining to FPO access, HRM program design, FPO staff qualifications, FPO staff attitudes, managerial status and managerial support were tested to determine their relative influence on perceptions of FPO service quality, the criterion variable. The strength of the relationships between the predictor and criterion variables provide the basis of developing plausible arguments on how to improve the quality of FPO services.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This chapter reports the results of the data analysis outlined in Figure 7 - Data Analysis Plan Summarized by Null Hypothesis, Chapter Three. Sixteen independent variables that were thought to influence managers' perception of the overall service provided by federal personnel offices were examined. The design of the research included two surveys administered in six organizations. One survey was administered to the managers and one to the personnel specialists in each organization. The analysis of the study was conducted in three phases. During the first phase, the managers' survey was analyzed to examine the relationships between seven predictor variables and the criterion variable of perceived FPO service quality. In the second phase of the analysis, the personnel specialists' survey was used to examine the relationships between nine predictor variables pertaining to the FPO staff, and the overall service quality ratings of the FPOs. The third phase of the analysis involved a partial correlation analysis in order to identify spurious relationships and intervening variables.

The Managers' Survey

Managers were asked to rate the service quality of their organization's Federal personnel office (FPO). A relationship between this response (criterion variable) and their answers to other questions (predictor variables) was examined. The criterion variable of FPO Service Quality was based on the managers' response to question 20:

Criterion Variable: Question 20 (Manager's Survey) - Enter the number from the choices below that indicates your best answer to the following questions:

- Choices:
1. Not at all
 2. To a small extent
 3. To a moderate extent
 4. To a large extent
 5. To a very large extent

- Questions:
- A. Provide high quality service overall?
 - B. Inform employees about important changes in personnel rules or benefits?
 - C. Treat people courteously?
 - D. Provide timely, efficient service?
 - E. Give accurate answers?
 - F. Provide a wide scope of services?

This question corresponds to the measures of service quality and HR effectiveness criteria discussed in Chapter Two, Figure 3. Six measures were identified: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and innovation. This question does not address tangibles, however the measure of reliability is covered in question 20E (accurate answers); responsiveness is covered in 20B (inform employees) and 20D

(timely, efficient service); assurance is covered in 20A (quality of service provided); empathy is covered in question 20C (treat people courteously); and innovation is covered in 20F (wide scope of services).

The managerial responses to the various elements of question 20 are summarized at Table 5 and Table 6. The element of courtesy was rated the highest by managers, with 59% stating that the FPO staff treats people courteously to a large or great extent. The next highest rated element was that of informing employees, with 45% of the managers stating that this service was provided to a large or great extent. The third highest element was providing the managers with accurate answers. The element receiving the lowest rating was the efficiency of service, with less than 20% responding that efficient service was provided to a large or great extent.

Table 5

Federal Managers' Rating of FPO Service Quality

ELEMENT	Not at All	Small Extent	Moderate Extent	Large Extent	Great Extent	Row Total
A. Quality Service	6.4%	25.1%	40.6%	24.7%	3.2%	100%
B. Inform Employees	5.5%	22.0%	28.3%	35.4%	8.7%	100%
C. Courteous Service	2.4%	8.3%	30.7%	43.3%	15.4%	100%
D. Efficient Service	10.8%	34.4%	35.2%	16.8%	2.8%	100%
E. Accurate Answers	2.4%	22.5%	34.4%	35.2%	5.5%	100%
F. Wide Scope	3.2%	23.7%	32.5%	32.9%	7.6%	100%

N=279 with 11 missing cases.

Table 6

Federal Managers' Rating of FPO Service Quality
(Comparison of Means)

QUESTION	ELEMENT	MEAN	Std Dev
Q 20 A	Quality Service	2.93	.94
Q 20 B	Inform Employees	3.20	1.05
Q 20 C	Courteous Treatment	3.61	.92
Q 20 D	Efficient Service	2.66	.97
Q 20 E	Accurate Answers	3.19	.93
Q 20 F	Wide Scope	3.18	.99

To provide a summary of managers' responses to sub-questions 20A through 20F, mean scores were calculated, and a numeric value provided for each mean score. The new numeric value was intended to correspond with the five choices and responses to questions 20A through 20F, and to incorporate each 20th percentile of the respondents. Table 7 shows the data transformation to form the Service Quality Summary Rating for question 20.

Table 7

Question 20 - Service Quality Summary Ratings

New Value	Mean Score	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
1	1.00	6	2.2	2.3
1	1.33	1	.4	2.7
1	1.50	3	1.1	3.9
1	1.67	1	.4	4.3
1	1.83	5	1.9	6.2
1	2.00	10	3.7	10.1
1	2.17	6	2.2	12.4
1	2.33	17	6.3	19.0

Table 7 - (Continued)

New Value	Mean Score	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
2	2.50	18	6.7	26.0
2	2.67	21	7.8	34.1
2	2.83	17	6.3	40.7
3	3.00	22	8.2	49.2
3	3.17	10	3.7	53.1
3	3.33	23	8.6	62.0
4	3.50	23	8.6	70.9
4	3.60	2	.7	71.7
4	3.67	16	5.9	77.9
4	3.75	1	.4	78.3
4	3.80	1	.4	78.7
5	3.83	21	7.8	86.8
5	4.00	14	5.2	92.2
5	4.17	5	1.9	94.2
5	4.33	6	2.2	96.5
5	4.50	4	1.5	98.1
5	4.67	3	1.1	99.2
5	4.83	1	.4	99.6
5	5.00	1	.4	100.0

The predictor variables measured in the manager's survey were:

FPO Access

- Hypothesis # 1 - Proximity of the FPO to the manager
- Hypothesis # 2 - Method used to contact the FPO for service

HRM Program Design

- Hypothesis # 3 - Time line for staffing and classification actions

Managerial Status

- Hypothesis # 13 - Level of management responsibility
- Hypothesis # 14 - Years of supervisory experience

Managerial Support

- Hypothesis # 15 - Approval authority for HRM actions
- Hypothesis # 16 - Supervisory training (Pre and Post)

As discussed in Chapter Three, each null hypothesis was examined using three primary statistical measures to examine the association between variables. Survey responses were presented in contingency table format to highlight the characteristics (counts) of the predictor and criterion variables. Chi-square analysis was used to test the null hypothesis for independence. Goodman and Kruskal's gamma and Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was used to index the strength of variable association. The significance of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used as a second test of the null hypotheses. The decision to accept or reject a null hypothesis was based on this test. Although the Spearman correlation can range from -1.00 to +1.00, most relationships observed in human resources are linear in the magnitude of .00 to .60 (Cohen 1988) (Schmitt and Klimoski 1991). Based on Schmitt and Klimoski's (1991) discussion of correlation coefficients, the Spearman correlation coefficient was interpreted as follows:

- a. .00 - .10 no relationship
- b. .11 - .19 small relationship,
- c. .20 - .39 modest relationship, and
- d. .40 - .60 substantial relationship.

The third and final step of the analyses involved partial correlation analysis, which will be fully discussed at the end of the chapter.

The next section, Hypothesis Testing - Manager's Survey, is organized by major organizational dimension. Each alternative and null hypothesis is stated, along with the survey question relating to the predictor variable. Following this is a brief discussion of the results of the hypothesis testing. A crosstabulation is presented showing the responses in numbers and percentages. Below each table, summary statistics pertaining to the chi-square and Spearman's rank order correlation analysis of the hypothesis are presented.

The numbering of hypotheses is based on listing the organizational variables pertaining to the service provider first, followed by hypotheses pertaining to customer expectations. In this section, the discussion of hypotheses will be in the order analyzed by survey. Therefore, they will not be in strict numeric order.

Hypotheses Testing - Manager's Survey

FPO Access

Hypothesis # 1

Alternative - As the physical distance between the Federal personnel office and the Federal manager's place of work increases, the Federal manager's rating of FPO services decreases.

Null - There is no relationship between Federal managers' rating of FPO services and their work location.

Predictor Variable: Question 8 (Manager's Survey) - Where is your personnel office located?

1. Same building
2. In another building nearby
3. In another part of the city
4. In another city
5. In another state

Because of the small number of respondents in categories 4 (another city) and 5 (another state), they were combined with category 3 (another part of the city). Category 1 (same building) was combined with Category 2 (another building). This combination allowed two categories to be established that had meaning. Was the FPO located on the same installation as the manager, or was the FPO located on a separate installation? If the FPO was on the same installation, the manager would have the convenience of “easy physical access” to services. If the FPO was on another installation, physical access would be difficult, and services would most likely have to be provided by telephone, computer access or other means. Based on this logic, Question 8 was formatted into two categories:

1. Same installation - (same building, in another building nearby)
2. Another installation - (another part of the city, another city, another state)

Table 8 shows the relationship between question 20, the criterion variable, and question 8, the predictor variable. Managers that had the FPO located on an installation other than where they worked, rated the overall FPO service quality significantly lower than managers who had

the FPO located on the same installation. The chi-square value of 20.9 with 4 df, was significant at the .001 level, and Spearman's rank order correlation between service quality ratings and FPO proximity was modest (.25) and significant at the .001 level, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. The measures of association supported the alternative hypothesis.

Table 8

Relationship between FPO Proximity and Managers'
FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	FPO Proximity		Row Total
	THE SAME INSTALLATION	ANOTHER INSTALLATION	
Very High	25.4% 52	7.5% 4	21.7% 56
High	20.0% 41	3.8% 2	16.7% 43
Moderate	19.0% 39	28.3% 15	20.9% 54
Low	24.9% 51	41.5% 22	28.3% 73
Very Low	10.7% 22	18.9% 10	12.4% 32
Column Total	79.5% 205	20.5% 53	100% 258

N= 258 with 11 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 20.909 with 4 df, $p = <.001$

Gamma = .44

Spearman's correlation = .25, $p = <.001$

Hypothesis # 2

Alternative - As the use of direct personal contact between Federal managers and personnel specialists for services increases, the Federal managers' rating of FPO services increases.

Null - There is no relationship between Federal manager's rating of FPO services and their method of contact.

Predictor Variable: Question 7 (Manager's Survey) - How do you usually handle contacts with the personnel office?

1. Through an office at a level above me
2. Through an administrative person
3. Depends on the situation
4. Personally

Managers' rating of FPO service quality varied significantly with the manner in which they contacted the FPO to obtain service. Managers who handled contacts personally with the FPO rated service quality as high or very high 49% of the time, while less than 35% of those who used

Table 9

Relationship between Method of Contact and Managers' FPO
Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Method of FPO Contact				Row Total
	PERSONALLY	DEPENDS	ADMIN	HIGHER OFFICE	
Very High	27.5%	11.1%	20.0%	6.7%	21.5%
	36	5	13	1	55
High	21.4%	4.4%	15.4%	20.0%	16.8%
	28	2	10	3	43
Moderate	20.6%	28.9%	20.0%	6.7%	21.1%
	27	13	13	1	54
Low	22.1%	35.6%	32.3%	40.0%	21.8%
	29	16	21	6	72
Very Low	8.4%	20.0%	12.3%	26.7%	12.5%
	11	9	8	4	32
Column Total	51.2%	17.6%	25.6%	5.9%	100%
	131	45	65	15	256

N = 256 with 13 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 24.674 with 12 df, $p = .016$

Gamma = .25

Spearman's correlation .21, $p = <.001$

administrative personnel to handle contacts rated the service as high or very high. The chi-square value of 24.67 with 12 df was significant at the .02 level, and the Spearman correlation coefficient of .21 (modest) was significant at the .001 level, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. The measures of association supported the alternative hypothesis.

HRM Program Design

Hypothesis # 3

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of HRM program responsiveness will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between levels of HRM program responsiveness and the Federal managers' rating of FPO service quality.

Predictor Variable: Question 17B. (Manager Survey) - Over the past two years, what was the longest and shortest time it took to classify jobs?

1. One to two weeks
2. Two to four weeks
3. One to two months
4. Two to three months
5. Over three months.

FPOs prepare annual classification plans that establish goals for managing positions and the supporting classification action schedule for each fiscal year. Requests from supervisors to classify new positions, reclassify positions, or audit existing positions are influenced by the time tables in the annual plan, and the unscheduled workload of the

classification work unit. To this extent, the response time to classify positions is part of a HRM program design.

Table 10

Relationship between HRM Program Design (Responsiveness in Classifying Positions) and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Responsiveness in Classifying Positions				Row Total
	1-2 Weeks	2-4 Weeks	1-2 Months	Other	
Very High	55.6%	28.9%	22.4%	13.2%	21.6%
	5	11	15	10	41
High	33.3%	23.7%	10.4%	10.5%	14.2%
	3	9	7	8	27
Moderate	-	15.8%	26.9%	26.3%	23.2%
	-	6	18	20	44
Low	-	21.1%	26.9%	30.3%	25.8%
	-	8	18	23	49
Very Low	11.1%	10.5%	13.4%	19.7%	15.3%
	1	4	9	15	29
Column Total	4.7%	20.0%	35.3%	40.0%	100.0%
	9	38	67	76	190

N = 190 with 79 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 23.174 with 12 df, $p = <.03$

Gamma = .29

Spearman correlation = .25, $p = <.001$

Managers who had to wait the longest for positions to be classified provided the lowest overall FPO service quality ratings. As an example, 60% of the managers that waited less than one month for classification action rated the FPO service quality as high or very high as compared to 28% who waited longer than one month. The chi-square analysis had a value of 23.174 with 12 df, significant at the .03 level, and the Spearman correlation coefficient of .25 was significant at the .001 level. Based on

this analysis the null hypothesis was rejected. The measures of association supported the alternative hypothesis.

Managerial Status

Hypothesis # 13

Alternative - Federal managers with higher levels of management responsibility (managerial status) will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between a manager's level of management responsibility (organizational status) and their level of FPO service quality ratings.

Predictor Variable: Question 1 (Manager's Survey) - What is the level of your management responsibility?

- A. First-line supervisor
- B. Second-level supervisor
- C. Managers, supervising second level managers
- D. Top Manager, supervising managers.

Because of the small number of "Top Managers" participating in the survey (22), this category was combined with the general manager (C) category. As shown in Table 11, first line supervisors tend to rate FPO service quality higher than second line supervisors or managers. Over 44% of the first line supervisors rated FPO service quality as high or very high, compared to 32% of the second line supervisors, and 31% of the managers. The chi-square value of 16.329 with 8 df was significant at the .04 level, and Spearman's correlation coefficient of -.17 was significant at the .005 level. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Based on previous research findings, it was anticipated that the service quality ratings would increase with levels of management responsibility. The assumption was that higher levels of management would have more experience with HRM actions and have a greater understanding of the efforts provided by the FPO. The alternative hypothesis was incorrect. An inverse relationship was established.

Table 11

Relationship between Levels of Management Responsibility and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Level of Management Responsibility			Row Total
	First Line Supervisor	Second Line Supervisor	Manager	
Very High	24.6% 32	20.4% 11	14.3% 10	20.9% 53
High	19.7% 25	11.1% 6	17.1% 12	16.9% 43
Moderate	25.4% 33	13.0% 7	20.0% 14	21.3% 54
Low	23.1% 30	33.3% 18	35.7% 25	28.7% 73
Very Low	7.7% 10	22.2% 12	12.9% 9	12.2% 31
Column Total	51.2% 130	21.3% 54	27.6% 70	100.0% 254

N = 254 with 15 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 16.329 with 8 df, $p = .04$

Gamma = -.21

Spearman correlation = -.17, $p = .005$

Hypothesis # 14

Alternative - Federal managers with higher levels of supervisory/management experience (organizational status) will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between a manager's level of supervisory/management experience (organizational status) and their level of FPO service quality ratings.

Predictor Variable: Question 4 (Manager's Survey) - How many years have you been a supervisor/manager?

Table 12

Relationship between Years as a Supervisor and
FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Years as a Supervisor					Row Total
	Over 21	16 - 20 Years	11 - 15 Years	6 - 10 Years	5 or less Years	
Very High	26.5% 9	17.1% 6	26.1% 12	17.2% 10	22.6% 19	21.8% 56
High	17.6% 6	8.6% 3	19.6% 9	17.2% 10	17.9% 15	16.7% 43
Moderate	17.6% 6	28.6% 10	21.7% 10	19.0% 11	20.2% 17	21.0% 54
Low	26.5% 9	34.3% 12	23.9% 11	32.8% 19	25.0% 21	28.0% 72
Very Low	11.8% 4	11.4% 4	8.7% 4	13.8% 8	14.3% 12	12.5% 32
Column Total	13.2% 34	13.6% 35	17.9% 46	22.6% 58	32.7% 84	100.0% 257

N = 257 with 12 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 7.054 with 16 df, $p = .97$

Gamma = .01

Spearman correlation = .01, $p = .85$

As shown at Table 12, there was no significant relationship between managers' service quality ratings and their years of experience as a supervisor. Neither the chi-square analysis nor Spearman's correlation were significant, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Managerial Support

Hypothesis # 15

Alternative - Federal managers with higher levels of delegated authority for human resource management will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between a manager's level of delegated authority for human resource management actions and their level of FPO service quality ratings.

Predictor Variable: Question 6 (Manager's Survey) - What do you think about the authorities delegated to you for managing your personnel resources?

- A. Too much authority
- B. About right
- C. Not enough
- D. Don't know, can't judge.

For analysis, only data pertaining to 6B and 6C were considered appropriate to the hypothesis. Only 7 respondents indicated that they had too much authority (6A), and 10 indicated that they didn't know or couldn't judge (6D). In addition to the small response, these categories were not consistent with the concept of either having enough authority or insufficient authority to manage human resources. Approximately half of the respondents felt that the amount of authority that they had been delegated to manage their human resources was about right. The FPO service quality ratings given by those in this category were significantly higher than those who believed that they did not have enough authority.

Table 13

Relationship between Delegated Authority and
FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Amount of Delegated Authority		Row Total
	About Right	Not Enough	
Very High	28.1% 36	12.3% 13	20.9% 49
High	18.8% 24	13.2% 14	16.2% 38
Moderate	20.3% 26	21.7% 23	20.9% 47
Low	22.7% 29	35.8% 38	28.6% 67
Very Low	10.2% 13	17.0% 18	13.2% 31
Column Total	54.7% 128	45.3% 106	100.0% 234

N = 234 with 35 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 13.679 with 4 df, $p = .008$

Gamma = .33

Spearman correlation = .25, $p = <.001$

The chi-square value of 13.679 with 4 df was significant at the .008 level, and the Spearman correlation coefficient of .24 was significant at the .001 level, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. The measures of association supported the alternative hypothesis.

Hypothesis # 16

Alternative - Federal managers with higher levels of preparation for supervisory responsibility will provide higher levels of FPO service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between a manager's level of preparation for supervisory responsibility (management support) and their level of FPO service quality ratings.

Predictor Variables: Question 9 (Manager's Survey) - To what extent had the Government prepared you to handle your supervisory responsibilities (for example: through formal or informal training) before you were selected for your first supervisory position?

- A. To a great extent
- B. To some extent
- C. To no extent

Question 10 (Manager's Survey) - To what extent has the Government provided formal supervisory training following your first assignment to a supervisory position?

- A. To a large extent, i.e., two weeks or more
- B. To some extent, i.e., from one to two weeks
- C. To a small extent, i.e., less than one week
- D. None.

Table 14

Relationship between Pre-Supervisory Training and
FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Extent of Pre-Supervisory Training			Row Total
	Great	Some	None	
Very High	32.4%	23.2%	15.5%	21.9%
	11	32	13	56
High	20.6%	15.2%	17.9%	16.8%
	7	21	15	43
Moderate	17.6%	21.7%	20.2%	20.7%
	6	30	17	53
Low	11.8%	28.3%	34.5%	28.1%
	4	39	29	72
Very Low	17.6%	11.6%	11.9%	12.5%
	6	16	10	32
Column Total	13.3%	53.9%	32.8%	100.0%
	34	138	84	256

N = 256 with 13 missing observations

Pearson's chi square value of 9.468 with 8 df, $p = .30$

Gamma = .14

Spearman correlation = .11, $p = .08$

Over 67% of the supervisors received supervisory training prior to being assigned supervisory responsibilities, and over 94% had received post-supervisory training. The length of training in both pre-supervisory and post-supervisory situations did not influence perceptions of FPO service quality. As shown in Tables 14 and 15, there was not a significant difference between the length of training and FPO service quality ratings, nor was there a significant relationship between the variables, therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 15

Relationship between Post-Supervisory Training
and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Service Quality Ratings	Extent of Formal Post-Supervisory Training				Row Total
	Large Extent	Some Extent	Small Extent	No Extent	
Very High	24.4%	23.0%	12.5%	15.4%	21.8%
	24	26	4	2	56
High	17.2%	17.7%	15.6%	7.7%	16.7%
	17	20	5	1	43
Moderate	20.2%	19.5%	18.8%	38.5%	20.6%
	20	22	6	5	53
Low	27.3%	25.7%	43.8%	23.1%	28.4%
	27	29	14	3	73
Very Low	11.1%	14.2%	9.4%	15.4%	12.5%
	11	16	3	2	32
Column Total	38.5%	44.0%	12.5%	5.1%	100.0%
	99	113	32	13	257

N = 257 with 12 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 8.604 with 12 df, $p = .74$

Gamma = .09

Spearman correlation = .08, $p = .20$

The Personnel Specialists' Survey

Based on the managers' rating their FPO overall service quality, a rank order was established for each of the six FPOs. Table 16 shows the overall service quality ratings provided by the managers for the FPO servicing them. A chi-square analysis showed that the overall ratings were significantly different based on FPO. Because the survey was based on anonymity, the actual organizational designations of the FPOs are not used.

Table 16

Managers' Service Quality Ratings by FPO

FPO Service Quality Ratings	FPO Identity						Row Total
	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX	
Very High	5.0%	3.1%	7.8%	3.1%	7.8%	1.2%	21.7%
	13	8	20	8	20	3	56
High	2.7%	1.9%	6.2%	1.2%	2.3%	2.3%	16.7%
	7	5	16	3	6	6	43
Moderate	2.7%	2.3%	4.7%	4.7%	2.7%	5.8%	20.9%
	7	6	12	7	7	15	54
Low	4.3%	3.9%	3.1%	4.7%	1.9%	10.5%	28.3%
	11	10	8	12	5	27	73
Very Low	1.2%	1.6%	.8%	2.3%	.8%	5.8%	12.4%
	3	4	2	6	2	15	32
Column Total	15.9%	12.8%	22.5%	14.0%	8.9%	26.0%	100.0%
	41	33	58	36	23	67	258

N = 259 with 11 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 44.866 with 20 df, $p = <.001$

Table 17 shows the mean service ratings by FPO, and provides a rank order for analysis. FPO Three was ranked the highest, and had a mean

rating of 3.759. FPO Six was rated the lowest, and had a mean rating of 2.358. Based on the mean scores, three groupings occurred. As displayed at Table 18, FPOs Three and One, Five and Two, and Four and Six had similar mean scores. Using this rank order as a criterion variable, data from the Personnel Specialist's Survey was used to determine relationships expressed by hypotheses pertaining to the organizational dimensions of FPO staff qualifications and staff attitudes.

Table 17

FPO Service Quality Ratings - Mean Scores

FPO #	Mean Score	Std Dev	Cases
One	3.390	1.376	41
Two	3.091	1.400	33
Three	3.759	1.174	58
Four	2.861	1.417	36
Five	3.130	1.180	23
Six	2.358	1.111	67
	3.170	1.348	258

Table 18

FPO Rank Order

FPO Rank Order	FPO Identity	Mean Scores
Top Third	One & Three	3.390 & 3.758
Middle Third	Two & Five	3.091 & 3.130
Bottom Third	Four & Six	2.861 & 2.358

The predictor variables measured in the personnel specialist's survey were:

FPO Staff Qualifications

- Hypothesis # 4 - Education Level
- Hypothesis # 5 - Experience/grade
- Hypothesis # 6 - Performance Ratings
- Hypothesis # 7 - Performance Awards
- Hypothesis # 8 - Formal training

FPO Staff Attitudes

- Hypothesis # 9 - Self-Perceived Skill
- Hypothesis # 10 - Perception of FPO Role
- Hypothesis # 11 - Perception of Service Responsiveness
- Hypothesis # 12 - Perception of FPO Service Quality

As in the Managers' survey, three primary statistics were used to measure associations using the personnel specialist's survey. Chi-square was used to test the null hypotheses for independence. Goodman and Krusal's gamma and Spearman's correlation coefficient were used to measure the strength of variable association. The significance of Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was used to test the null hypotheses. The decision to accept or reject the null hypothesis was based on this test of significance. In order for the null hypothesis to be rejected, the Spearman correlation coefficient had to be significant at the .05 level. The same format as in the section on Hypothesis Testing - Manager's Survey, will be used in this section. Each alternative and null hypothesis is stated, the question relating to the predictor variable is stated, and a crosstabulation table is presented showing the responses in

numbers and percentages. The summary statistics relating to the hypothesis follow each table. A discussion of the findings is also included.

Hypothesis Testing - Personnel Specialists' Survey

FPO Staff Qualifications

Hypothesis # 4

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist education will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between Federal managers' rating of FPO services and the level of personnel specialist education within a FPO.

Predictor Variable: Question 3 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - What is your highest level of education?

- A. High school
- B. Some college
- C. Bachelor's degree
- D. Some graduate study
- E. Master's degree and beyond

Because of the small number of personnel specialists with some graduate study and MA degree or higher, these categories were consolidated with category 3C, Bachelor's Degree, and classified as BA or Higher. The distribution of education levels was fairly even by FPO. Neither the chi-square analysis nor the Spearman correlation coefficient were significant. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 19

Relationship between Education and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Ranking	Education Level			Row Total
	BA or Higher	Some College	High School	
Top Third	38.5%	40.0%	26.7%	36.6%
	10	12	4	26
Middle Third	23.1%	40.0%	33.3%	32.4%
	6	12	5	23
Bottom Third	38.5%	20.0%	40.0%	31.0%
	10	6	6	22
Column Total	36.6%	42.3%	21.1%	100.0%
	26	30	15	71

N = 71 with 1 missing observation

Pearson's chi-square value of 3.791 with 4 df, $p = .44$

Gamma = -.03

Spearman's correlation = -.02, $p = .85$

Hypothesis # 5

Alternative - FPOs with higher grade levels will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the grade level of personnel specialists within a FPO.

Predictor Variable: Question 1 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - What is your job title, series, and grade?

The top rated FPOs had the largest percentage of a particular grade at GS-11, the middle rated FPOs had the largest percentage at GS - 5, and the lowest rated FPOs had the largest percentage at GS-12. Other grade levels were fairly evenly distributed. The chi-square statistics showed a significant difference in the grades of the personnel

specialists in the lower, middle, and upper third of the FPOs based on service quality ratings; however, gamma and the rank order correlation indicated that there was not a relationship between grade levels and service quality ratings. Because the Spearman correlation coefficient was not significant, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 20

Relationship between FPO Staff Grade and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Ranking	FPO Staff Grade Levels					Row Total
	GS - 12	GS - 11	GS - 9	GS - 7	GS - 5	
Top Third	9.7%	15.3%	2.8%	5.6%	2.8%	36.1%
	7	11	2	4	2	26
Middle Third	6.9%	8.3%	-	5.6%	12.55	33.3%
	5	6	-	4	9	24
Bottom Third	16.7%	2.8%	2.8%	6.9%	1.4%	30.6%
	12	2	2	5	1	22
Column	33.3%	26.4%	5.6%	18.1%	16.9%	100.0%
Total	24	19	4	13	12	72

N = 72 with 0 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 21.306 with 8 df, $p = .006$

Gamma = .10

Spearman's correlation = .08, $p = .47$

Hypothesis # 6

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist performance ratings will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the level of personnel specialist performance ratings within a FPO.

Predictor Variable: Question 6 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - What were your summary ratings from your performance appraisals for the past three years?

- A. 1988
- B. 1989
- C. 1990

Chi-square analysis indicated a relationship between FPO staff performance ratings, and FPO rank. The top-third ranked FPOs had the majority of their personnel specialists rated as "exceeds fully successful," the middle ranked FPO's had the majority of their personnel specialists ranked as "outstanding," and the lower ranked FPO's had the majority of their staff rated as either "fully successful" or "outstanding." The values

Table 21

Relationship between FPO Staff Performance Ratings
and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Rank	Performance Ratings			Row Total
	Outstanding	Exceeds Fully Successful	Fully Successful	
Top Third	9.1% 6	22.7% 15	6.1% 4	37.9% 25
Middle Third	16.7% 11	10.6% 7	4.5% 3	31.8% 21
Bottom Third	10.6% 7	6.1% 4	13.6% 9	30.3% 20
Column Total	36.4% 24	39.4% 26	24.2% 16	100.0% 66

N = 66 with 6 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 12.457 with 4 df, p = .01

Gamma = .06

Spearman's correlation = .05, p = .67

of gamma and the rank order correlation indicated that a relationship did not exist between staff performance ratings and FPO rank. In addition, the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was not significant, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis # 7

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist performance awards will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the level of personnel specialist performance awards within a FPO.

Predictor Variable: Question 7 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - List awards for achievement and performance for the past three years:

Table 22

Relationship between FPO Staff Performance Awards (3 year period) and FPO Service Quality Ratings

Number of Staff Performance Awards

FPO Rank	Three or More	Two	One	None	Row Total
Top Third	8.8% 6	11.8% 8	11.8% 8	5.9% 4	38.2% 26
Middle Third	5.9% 4	5.9% 4	17.6% 12	4.4% 3	33.8% 23
Bottom Third	1.5% 1	8.8% 6	13.2% 9	4.4% 3	27.9% 19
Column Total	16.2% 11	26.5% 18	42.6% 29	14.7% 10	100.0% 68

N = 68 with 4 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 4.786 with 6 df, p = .57

Gamma = .19

Spearman's correlation = .15, p = .22

The distribution of individual performance awards by FPO did not indicate a pattern that could establish a relationship with overall service quality ratings. Neither the chi-square nor Spearman correlation were significant. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis # 8

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist formal training will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between Federal managers' rating of FPO services and the level of personnel specialist formal training within a FPO.

Predictor Variable: Question 8 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - List the Government-sponsored training courses (classroom or OJT), together with their length of time, you have completed in the last five years.

The FPO's with higher service quality ratings had personnel specialists that had attended more formal training. The top third rated FPO's had 22% of their personnel with 4 or more courses, the middle third had 16%, and the bottom third had 11%. The chi-square analysis was significant at the .07 level. Because of the high number (60%) of cells with less than 5, the basic assumptions of chi-square were not met. The value of gamma was .27 and the rank order correlation coefficient was modest at .24 and significant at .05. Based on the significance level of the Spearman correlation coefficient, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 23

Relationship between FPO Staff Training and
FPO Service Quality Ratings

Number of Formal Training Courses

FPO Rank	Five or More	Four	Three	Two	One or Less	Row Total
Top Third	14.5%	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%	1.4%	37.75
	10	5	5	5	1	26
Middle Third	1.4%	11.6%	11.6%	2.9%	5.8%	33.3%
	1	8	8	2	4	23
Bottom Third	5.8%	5.8%	4.3%	7.2%	5.8%	29.0%
	4	4	3	5	4	20
Column	21.7%	24.6%	23.2%	17.4%	13.0%	29.0%
Total	15	17	16	12	9	20

N = 69 with 3 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 14.581 with 8 df, $p = .07$

Gamma = .27

Spearman's correlation = .24, $p = .05$

FPO Staff Attitudes

Hypothesis # 9

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of personnel specialist self-perceived skills will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the level of personnel specialist self-perceived skills within a FPO.

Predictor Variable: Question 14 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - To what extent do you feel that you know enough to provide excellent service to the people who depend on you?

- To a very great extent: I'm well trained and experienced.
- To a large extent: I could use more training.
- To a small extent: there's a lot I don't know.
- To no extent: I'm overwhelmed and need a lot more development.

The majority of the personnel specialists (58%) in all of the FPOs believed their extent of technical knowledge to provide excellent service was small and there was a lot they didn't know (response 14C). None of the respondents indicated that the extent of their knowledge was great, and that they didn't need additional training (response 14A). The distribution of the responses to the question were similar between all FPOs, therefore a significant relationship was not established between the variables of self-perceived skills and FPO service quality ratings. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 24

Relationship between FPO Staff Self-Perceived Skills
and FPO Service Quality Ratings

Extent of Knowledge to Provide Excellent Service				
FPO Rank	Large Extent	Small Extent	No Extent	Row Total
Top Third	11.3%	21.1%	4.2%	36.6%
	8	15	3	26
Middle Third	12.7%	16.9%	2.8%	32.4%
	9	12	2	23
Bottom Third	9.9%	19.7%	1.4%	31.0%
	7	14	1	22
Column Total	33.8%	57.7%	8.5%	100.0%
	24	41	6	71

N = 71 with 1 missing observation

Pearson's chi-square value of 1.237 with 4 df, $p = .87$

Gamma = .07

Spearman's correlation = .05, $p = .68$

Hypothesis # 10

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of agreement on FPO roles oriented towards helping managers will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the levels of FPO staff agreement on FPO roles oriented toward helping managers.

Predictor Variables: Question 10 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) Do you agree that the current role of your personnel office is:

- A. To help managers get their job done.
- B. To see that everyone complies with the law, OPM regulations and agency policy.
- C. To protect the rights of employees.
- D. To promote efficiency through effective human resources management.

For each question listed, indicate the following:

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree.

Questions 10A and 10D are oriented toward helping managers.

Questions 10B and 10C are oriented toward compliance.

When answering the questions, the personnel specialists in each FPO agreed with all four roles, indicating a balance between a service and compliance orientation. The uniformity of responses did not permit a robust test of the hypothesis. The chi-square statistic was only significant for question 10A. The Spearman correlation coefficient was not significant for any of the questions, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 25

Relationship between FPO Staff Agreement on FPO Role of Helping
Managers and FPO Service Quality Ratings

Role of the FPO is to Help Managers

FPO Rank	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Row Total
Top Third	14.3% 10	22.9% 16	- -	- -	37.1% 26
Middle Third	10.0% 7	12.9% 9	5.7% 4	2.9% 2	31.4% 22
Bottom Third	20.0% 14	8.6% 6	2.9% 2	- -	31.4% 22
Column	44.3%	44.3%	8.6%	2.9%	100.0%
Total	31	31	6	2	70

$N = 70$ with 2 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 15.043 with 6 df, $p = .02$

Gamma = .15

Spearman's correlation = -.12, $p = .33$

Hypothesis # 11

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of staff agreement on service responsiveness (time to classify positions) will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the levels of FPO staff agreement on service responsiveness standards (time to classify positions).

Predictor Variable: Question 20 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - When a manager needs a position classified by the personnel office, what do you think should be a reasonable time from receipt of the initial request to the decision?

- A. One to two weeks.
- B. Two to four weeks.
- C. One to two months.
- D. Other.

Because of the small number of responses in category 20D they were consolidated with 20C, making a category of "over 1 month." The

perception of a reasonable time to classify a position equates to a service standard. It was expected that personnel specialists that had a higher service standard for classifying positions would be more responsive to managers and thereby receive higher service quality ratings. The chi-square test of independence had a significance level of .10. The value of gamma was -.43, the second highest level achieved in the data analysis. The rank order correlation coefficient was -.30, with a significance level of .01. Because of the strong relationship between the variables and the significance level of the correlation coefficient, the null hypothesis was rejected. The data analysis did not support the alternative hypothesis. The FPOs with lower perceptions of desired response times received higher service quality ratings. To examine this inverse relationship,

Table 26

Relationship between FPO Staff Perceptions of Desired Response Time to Classify Positions and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Rank	Response Time to Classify Positions			Row Total
	1-2 Weeks	2-4 Weeks	Over 1 Month	
Top Third	4.5%	23.9%	10.4%	38.8%
	3	16	7	26
Middle Third	11.9%	13.4%	4.5%	29.9%
	8	9	3	20
Bottom Third	13.4%	14.9%	3.0%	31.3%
	9	10	2	21
Column Total	29.9%	52.2%	17.9%	100.0%
	29	35	12	67

N = 67 with 5 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 7.616 with 4 df, $p = .10$

Gamma = -.43

Spearman's correlation = -.30, $p = .01$

questions relating to classification standards on the managers' survey were analyzed. Managers were asked about their expectations regarding times to classify positions. As shown in Table 27, managers' expectations were similar to the personnel specialists' expectations based on FPO ranking. Managers and personnel specialists from lower ranked FPOs had higher expectations than those from the higher ranked FPOs. Managers were asked to indicate the longest time experienced in waiting

Table 27

Federal Managers' Expectations on the Time to Classify Positions

FPO Rank	Response Time to Classify Positions			Row Total
	1-2 Weeks	2-4 Weeks	1-2 Months	
Top Third	9.0%	21.0%	8.6%	38.6%
	24	56	23	103
Middle Third	6.0%	12.4%	4.5%	22.8%
	16	33	12	61
Bottom Third	12.0%	22.1%	4.5%	38.6%
	32	59	12	103
Column Total	27%	55.4%	17.6%	100.0%
	72	148	47	267

N = 267 with 2 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 4.801 with 4 df, $p = .31$

Gamma = $-.17$

Spearman's correlation coefficient = $-.12$, $p = .05$

for the FPO staff to classify positions. As shown in Table 28, managers serviced by the lower ranking FPOs had to wait longer than those serviced by the higher ranked FPOs. This indicates that expected service standards from the top ranked FPOs were more likely to be met than the expected service standards from the lower ranked FPOs. Another way of

stating this observation is that the gap between service expectations and service delivery was greater in the lower ranked FPOs than in the higher ranked FPOs. An examination of Spearman's correlation coefficient for Tables 26, 27 and 28 ($p = .05$) indicates that personnel specialists and managers from the lower ranked FPOs have higher service response expectations than higher ranked FPOs, but that actual service delivery is less responsive than in the higher ranked FPOs.

Table 28

Longest Time to Classify Positions

FPO Rank	Longest Response Time				Row Total
	1-2 Weeks	2-4 Weeks	1-2 Months	Other	
Top Third	2.0%	8.6%	11.2%	13.2%	35.0%
	4	17	22	26	69
Middle Third	2.0%	5.6%	9.6%	4.1%	21.3%
	4	11	19	8	42
Bottom Third	.5%	7.1%	13.7%	22.3%	43.7%
	1	14	27	44	86
Column	4.6%	21.3%	34.5%	39.6%	100.0%
Total	9	42	68	78	197

$N = 197$ with 72 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 15.746 with 6 df, $p = .02$

Gamma = -.22

Spearman's correlation coefficient = -.17, $p = .02$

Hypothesis # 12

Alternative - FPOs with higher levels of perceived service quality by the personnel specialists will receive higher levels of managerial service quality ratings.

Null - There is no relationship between FPO service quality ratings and the levels of perceived service quality by personnel specialists.

Predictor Variable: Question 12 (Personnel Specialist's Survey) - How well do you think the managers and supervisors you service believe your personnel office is helping them?

- A. Extremely Well
- B. Very Well
- C. Adequately
- D. Less Than Adequately
- E. Poorly

When asked how well managers believe their FPO is helping them, the majority of the personnel specialists (77%) indicated adequate or very well. As shown by the chi-square analysis and the Spearman correlation coefficient, there was not a significant relationship between self-perceptions of "how well the FPO is helping managers" and FPO service quality ratings, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 29

Relationship between FPO Staff Perceptions of How Manager's Believe the FPO is Helping Them and FPO Service Quality Ratings

FPO Rank	Perception of How Well the FPO is Helping Managers				Row Total
	Extremely Well	Very Well	Adequate	Less Than Adequate	
Top Third	2.9%	12.9%	14.3%	5.7%	35.7%
	2	9	10	4	25
Middle Third	5.7%	14.3%	10.0%	2.9%	32.9%
	4	10	7	2	23
Bottom Third	1.4%	7.1%	18.6%	4.3%	31.4%
	1	5	13	3	2
Column	10.0%	34.3%	42.9%	12.9%	100.0%
Total	7	24	30	9	70

N = 70 with 2 missing observations

Pearson's chi-square value of 9.289, with 7 df, $p = .32$

Gamma = .13 Spearman's correlation = -.09, $p = .48$

Partial Correlation Analysis

In the previous two phases of the data analysis, bivariate associations were examined using Pearson's chi-square values, Goodman and Kruskal's gamma, and Spearman's rank order correlation. While the nature of the bivariate associations is important, it is also important to know how and why they are related. A major concern in any sample survey is the avoidance of spurious associations (Reynolds 1977). A spurious association is one in which the correlation between two variables results solely from the fact that one of the variables is correlated with a third variable that is the true predictor. Statistically, this problem can be addressed through methods of partial correlation (Siegel 1956) (Gibbons 1976) (Reynolds 1977). In partial correlation, the effects of a third (or more) variable is held constant while the extent of the relation between two variables is determined.

According to Reynolds (1977), investigators in the social sciences are faced with two options when measuring partial association between variables with ordinal data. A common practice is to treat ordinal variables as if they were interval and use the standard partial correlation coefficient, a technique closely related to multiple linear regression, which provides a single measure of linear association between two variables while adjusting for the linear effects of one or more additional

variables. Depending on the nature of the variables, this option has some risks which could lead to erroneous conclusions (Reynolds 1977, 98). The second option is to use measures developed specifically for ordinal and nominal scales. Some of these measures are Goodman and Kruskal's partial lambda (based on proportional reduction in error logic), viewing partial association as an average, and Quade's index of matched correlation (based on weighted averages). According to Reynolds (1977), Kim (1975) and Blalock (1979), the theoretical underpinnings of nonparametric partial correlation methods are not strong. They have some major practical weakness as they produce results only slightly less than the original correlations and normally they do not approach zero (Reynolds 1977, 98).

Faced with this situation, Reynolds (1977) and Blalock (1979) endorse the use of ordinal variables in parametric formulas providing each variable has at least five or more categories. Other statisticians that take this position and produce empirical evidence that violations in measurement assumptions usually do not cause many mistakes in significance tests or parameter estimation are Burke (1953), Labovitz (1970), and Boyle (1970).

Based on the discussion above, the desire to measure significance levels, and the readily understood measures associated with product-

moment correlation, the ordinal variables of this study were tested using parametric measures of partial correlation. Because of the potential problems associated with using either approach, and that some of the ordinal variables had less than five categories for analysis, the information in this phase of the analysis was used for additional insight and not for hypothesis testing.

Table 30 displays the descriptive statistics of the managers' survey and Table 31 displays the descriptive statistics of the personnel specialists' survey. Table 32 shows the partial correlation analysis relating to the managers' survey. Eight predictor variables (2-9) were examined for their relationship to the criterion variable (1 - Service Quality Ratings). When examining the zero partial correlation coefficients, the predictor variables of proximity of FPO, method of contact (Access), response time (HRM Program Design), management level (managerial status), and delegated authority (managerial support) were significant at the .05 or .01 level. This corresponds with the significance of the findings during the bivariate analysis. When each predictor variable was examined in relation to service quality ratings with all other variables held constant, all variables had slightly lower levels of correlation and significance. Only the method of contact variable was no longer significant at the .05 level. The high correlation between proximity

correlation and significance. Only the method of contact variable was no longer significant at the .05 level. The high correlation between proximity of the FPO and method of contact (.25) indicates that the method of contact is a spurious relationship. The location of the FPO in relation to the manager may dictate the method of contact.

Table 30
Descriptive Statistics - Managers' Survey Variables

VARIABLE	Mean	S. E. Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	Valid N
1. Quality Ratings	3.07	.08	1.35	1.00 - 5.00	258
2. FPO Proximity	1.79	.02	.41	1.00 - 2.00	269
3. Contact Method	3.14	.06	.99	1.00 - 3.00	267
4. Responsiveness	3.09	.06	.89	1.00 - 4.00	197
5. Mgmt Level	1.84	.05	.86	1.00 - 4.00	268
6. Experience	12.11	.38	6.20	5.00 - 21.00	267
7. HRM Authority	2.53	.04	.62	1.00 - 2.00	262
8. Pre-Supv Tng	1.80	.04	.65	1.00 - 3.00	267
9. Post-Supv Tng	1.85	.05	.86	1.00 - 4.00	268

Table 31

Descriptive Statistics - Personnel Specialists' Survey Variables

VARIABLE	Mean	S. E. Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	Valid N
1. FPO Rank Order	-	-	-	1.00 - 3.00	72
2. Education Level	2.15	.09	.75	1.00 - 3.00	71
3. Grade	9.67	.29	.75	5.00 - 12.00	72
4. Performance Ratings	3.16	.10	.81	1.00 - 4.00	66
5. Performance Awards	1.44	.11	.94	0.00 - 5.00	68
6. Training Courses	4.55	.43	3.55	1.00 - 11.00	69
7. Perceived Skills	3.25	.07	.60	2.00 - 4.00	71
8. Perceived FPO Role	1.70	.09	.75	1.00 - 4.00	70
9. Perceived Standards	6.88	.08	.69	6.00 - 8.00	70
10. Service Perceptions	3.40	.11	.88	1.00 - 4.00	70

Table 32

Relationship of Managers' Survey Predictor Variables to FPO Service
Quality Ratings - Partial Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Partial Corr.	Zero Order Partial Correlation Coefficients							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Quality Ratings		-							
2. FPO Proximity	.23**	.30**	-						
3. Contact Method	.10	.16*	.25**	-					
4. Responsiveness	.24**	.28**	-.11	.01	-				
5. Mgmt Level	-.18*	-.22**	-.09	-.13	.09	-			
6. Experience	.06	-.01	-.09	-.11	.06	.18*	-		
7. HRM Authority	.15*	.19*	.10	-.01	-.12	-.05	-.03	-	
8. Pre-Supv Tng	.05	.08	.05	-.02	-.09	.08	.11	.06	-
9. Post-Supv Tng	-.03	-.03	-.05	.01	-.02	-.16	-.33**	.12	-.25**

N = 178 valid observations listwise

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 33 shows the partial correlation analysis relating to the personnel specialists' survey. Nine predictor variables (2-10) were examined for their relationship to the criterion variable (1 - FPO Rank Order). During the bivariate analysis using Spearman's correlation coefficient, the predictor variables relating to FPO staff training and FPO staff service standards were significant. During partial correlation analysis only the variable relating to FPO staff service standards remained significant (.05) with a partial correlation coefficient of .28. The variable relating to FPO staff training was no longer significant. When examining zero order correlation coefficients, training had a significant correlation with the level of education (.36). Because FPO staff

education levels are not related to FPO rankings, training was not considered a spurious variable. The difference in calculation methods between Spearman's and Pearson's correlation coefficient (i.e., Spearman only considers rank order), and the resulting minor variation in correlation coefficient and significance levels, provides additional support for not classifying training as a spurious variable.

Table 33

Relationship of Personnel Specialists' Survey Predictor Variables to FPO Service Quality Rankings - Partial Correlation Coefficients

		Zero Order Partial Correlation Coefficients								
Variable	Partial Corr.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. FPO Rank	-	-								
2. Education	-.06	-.04	-							
3. Grade	-.03	-.03	.42**	-						
4. Ratings	.07	.07	.04	.06	-					
5. Awards	.17	.21	-.09	.06	.04	-				
6. Training	.20	.24	.36**	.03	.13	.16	-			
7. Skills	-.01	-.02	.30**	.39*	.16	-.13	.02	-		
8. FPO Role	-.08	-.09	-.24	.45**	.07	.07	.07	.40**	-	
9. Standards	-.28*	-.32*	-.17	.10	.08	.08	.08	.13	-.01	-
10. Service	.02	-.09	.03	.02	.19	-.24	.02	.16	.03	.08

$N = 72$ valid observations listwise

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Summary of Findings

The study examined six organizational dimensions relating to FPO service quality. Four were tested using the managers' survey. The four dimensions, FPO access, HRM program design, managerial status and

managerial support, all had significant findings. Two dimensions, FPO staff qualifications and FPO staff attitudes, were tested using the personnel specialists' survey. Each dimension had one significant finding. A brief discussion follows.

Within the dimension of access to services, the proximity of the FPO to the managers' place of work and the method of contact used to obtain services were related to managers' perceptions of FPO service quality. When the FPO was located on the same installation, managers gave the FPO significantly higher ratings than the managers whose FPO was located on another installation. In addition, the method of contacting the FPO to obtain service was also influencing perceptions of service quality. Managers who personally contacted the FPO provided significantly higher ratings than managers who obtained the services through secondary sources. When this variable was examined using partial correlation analysis, it was no longer significant. This variable has a moderate correlation (.25) with FPO proximity. For this reason it is considered a spurious variable. Within the dimension of HRM program design, response time in classifying positions was significantly related to managers service quality ratings. When measuring the time between a request being submitted to classify a position, and the FPO final classification action, those managers experiencing a longer wait provided

significantly lower ratings than managers experiencing shorter waiting times.

Two of the dimensions examined, managerial status and managerial support, related primarily to customer expectations. Within the dimension of managerial status, two hypotheses were examined. The first, management level, revealed that first line supervisors gave significantly higher service quality ratings than second level supervisors or managers. The second hypothesis examined found no significant relationship between years of experience as a supervisor and service quality ratings. Within the dimension of managerial support, three hypotheses were examined. The first involved the authority delegated for managing human resources. Those managers who believed they had been delegated an appropriate level of authority gave significantly higher FPO ratings than those managers who stated that they had not been delegated sufficient authority. The other two hypotheses examined pertained to pre-supervisory and post-supervisory training. A significant relationship was not found between the levels of training provided and the FPO service quality ratings.

The organizational dimensions of FPO staff qualifications and FPO staff attitudes, were examined in relation to the overall FPO service quality ratings. These relationships were tested using the personnel

specialists' survey. Within the dimension of staff qualifications, only the hypothesis relating to FPO staff training had a significant relationship to FPO service quality ratings with a modest correlation of .24. Higher levels of staff training were associated with higher FPO service quality ratings. Hypotheses relating to staff education, grade, performance ratings, and performance awards were not significant. Within the dimension of FPO staff attitudes (service orientation), the hypothesis relating to perceived service standards was significant with a -.30 correlation with FPO service quality ratings. The negative correlation did not support the alternative hypothesis. To find possible explanations, two related questions on the managers' survey were examined, revealing that personnel specialists and managers from the lower ranked FPOs have higher service response expectations than higher ranked FPOs, but that actual service delivery is less responsive than in the higher ranked FPOs. Another way of stating this observation is that the gap between service expectations and service delivery was greater in the lower ranked FPOs than in the higher ranked FPOs. This is consistent with Gronroos' (1984) theory that the overall perception of quality is a function of the customer's evaluation of the service and the difference between this evaluation and his or her expectations of the service. Hypotheses

relating to FPO staff perceptions of their skill level, the role of the FPO, and the quality of service provided to managers were not significant.

Figure 33 - Summary of Research Findings Based on Chi-Square, Gamma, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation, and Partial Correlation Analysis, provides a brief overview of the study results.

Table 34

Summary of Research Findings Based on Chi-Square, Gamma, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation, and Partial Correlation Analysis

HYPOTHESES	Chi-Square			Gamma Statistic	Spearman		Partial	
	χ^2	DF	Sig		Value	Sig	Value	Sig
Access to Services								
1. Proximity of FPO	20.909	4	.01	Gamma .44	.25	.01	.23	.01
2. Method of Contact	24.674	12	.02	Gamma .25	.21	.01	.06	.40
HRM Program Design								
3. Response Time	23.174	12	.03	Gamma .29	.25	.01	.24	.01
FPO Staff Qualifications								
4. Education	3.791	4	.44	Gamma -.03	-.02	.85	-.06	.68
5. Grade	21.306	8	.01	Gamma .10	-.09	.47	-.03	.84
6. Performance Ratings	12.457	4	.04	Gamma .06	.05	.67	-.07	.65
7. Performance Awards	4.786	6	.57	Gamma .19	.15	.22	.17	.27
8. Training Courses	14.581	8	.07	Gamma .27	.24	.05	.18	.16
FPO Staff Attitudes								
9. Self-Perceived Skills	1.237	4	.87	Gamma .07	.05	.68	-.01	.91
10. Perceived FPO Role	15.043	6	.02	Gamma .15	.12	.33	-.08	.65
11. Perceived Standards	9.174	6	.16	Gamma -.43	-.30	.01	.28	.05
12. Perception of Service	9.289	7	.16	Gamma .13	-.08	.48	.02	.92
Managerial Status								
13. Management Level	16.329	8	.04	Gamma -.21	-.17	.01	-.18	.01
14. Years of Experience	7.054	16	.97	Gamma .01	.01	.85	-.09	.27
Managerial Support								
15. Delegated Authority	13.679	4	.01	Gamma .33	.25	.01	.15	.05
16a. Pre-Supervisory Tng	9.468	8	.30	Gamma .14	.11	.08	.05	.56
16b. Post-Supervisory Tng	8.604	12	.73	Gamma .09	.08	.21	-.03	.67

Note: Highlighted areas indicate significant findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The services provided by Federal personnel offices (FPOs) are important to the efficient operation of Federal agencies, however studies have shown that Federal managers are not satisfied with the quality of services provided. The purpose of this research was to identify the organizational barriers to the delivery of high quality personnel office services. This chapter begins with a brief review of the general problem and the steps that were taken leading to the design of the research and the testing of the hypotheses. Following this is a discussion of the significant findings and their relationship to current research, implications for current theory and applied settings, recommendations for future research, and recommendations for improving FPO service quality.

The Research Problem and Design

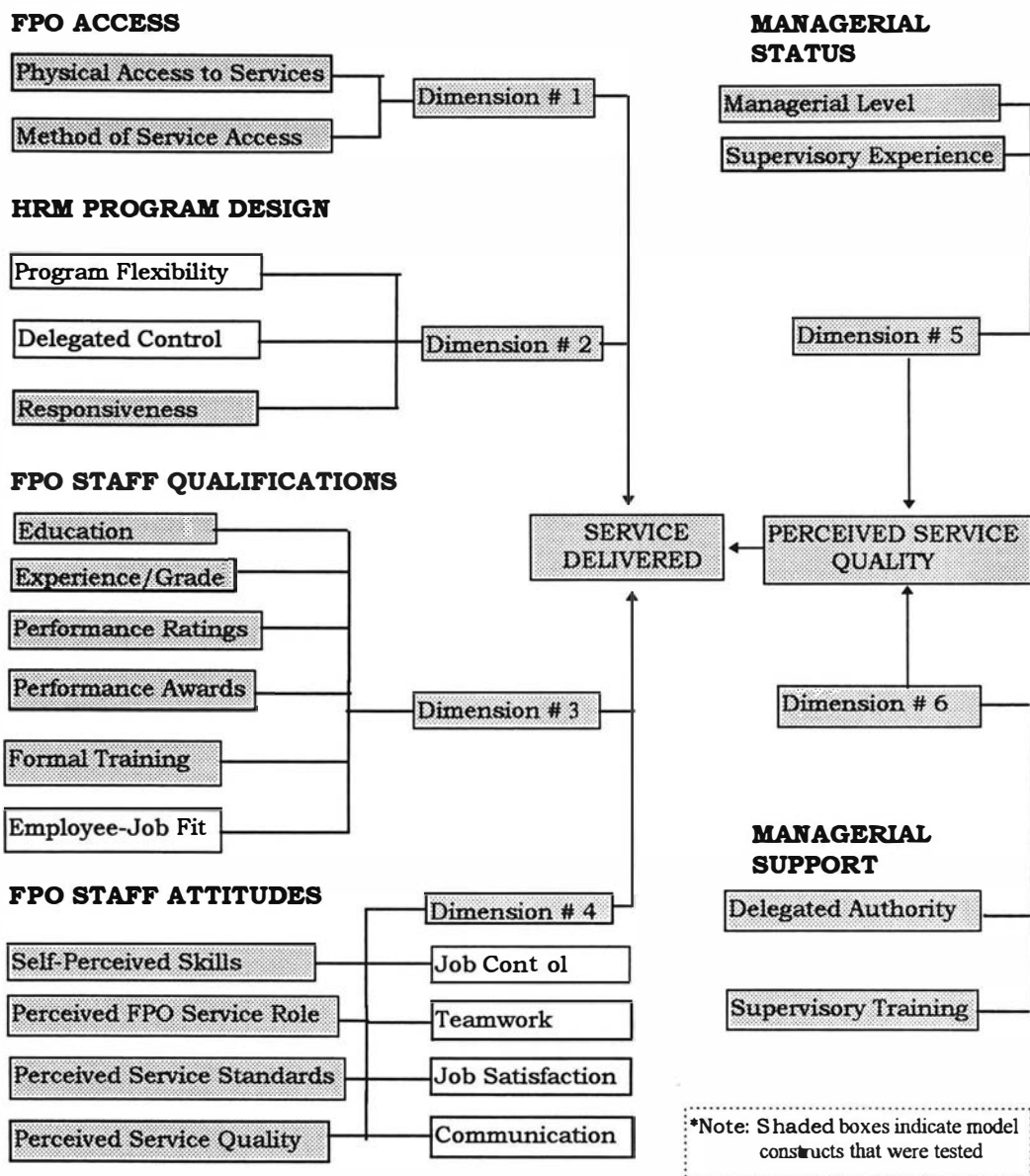
The research began with a literature review to determine which organizational variables influence perceptions of service quality. The review of previous research studies conducted in private sector service

industries and government agencies identified over twenty organizational variables that were found to have a significant relationship. The investigator classified these variables into six organizational dimensions, which formed the basis of a conceptual model of FPO service quality (Figure 4, page 75). The purpose of the model was to provide a framework for hypothesis building and testing. Within the six organizational dimensions, twenty-three supporting constructs were identified and hypothesized.

The research design was based on analytical survey data used to examine the relationships between a set of predictor variables (based on the model) and the criterion variable of perceived service quality. Two different surveys were used to gather data. The first, designed for personnel specialists, gathered information on the service provider. The second, designed for Federal managers, gathered information on the recipients of FPO services. The surveys were designed and administered by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). Six representative Federal organizations were identified, and within these organizations the surveys were randomly administered to 72 personnel specialists and 269 Federal managers. The surveys were originally designed for a MSPB study of FPO effectiveness, and contained questions which could be used to test sixteen of the twenty three constructs identified in the literature

Figure 8

An Operational Model of Federal Personnel Office (FPO)
Perceived Service Quality - As Tested



review and included in the conceptual model developed by the investigator. Although the use of these surveys presented some limitations, all six categories of constructs or organizational dimensions were tested allowing the purpose of the study to be achieved. The basic research question, “How do the major organizational variables of FPO access, HRM program design, FPO staff qualifications, FPO staff attitudes, managerial status and managerial support influence perceptions of FPO service quality?” was answered. Figure 8 - An Operational Model of Federal Personnel Office (FPO) Perceived Quality as Tested, has been annotated to illustrate the constructs developed based on the literature review and those tested in this study.

Significant Findings

Within the category of FPO access, the proximity of the FPO to the manager’s place of work was significantly ($p = <.01$) related to perceptions of service quality, with a modest correlation of .25. When the FPO was on the same installation (same building or another building), managers rated FPO services significantly higher than when the FPO was located on another installation (another city, another state). The hypothesis relating to method of contact (personal, combination of personal & through others, through others) was found to have a

significant ($p = .01$) relationship and modest correlation (.21) with perceptions of service quality during the bivariate analysis. During the partial correlation analysis, it proved to be a spurious variable.

Within the category of HRM program design, the response time between managerial request and FPO final action was significantly related ($p = < .01$) to perceptions of service quality with a modest correlation of .25. The particular HRM program examined was position classification. Normally the response time for action is determined by the FPO's annual position classification and management plan and not by the "responsiveness" of individual personnel specialists. The survey shows that FPOs with a higher priority on position classification response time (under 30 days, 1-2 months, 2-3 months, over 3 months) receive significantly higher FPO service quality ratings.

Within the categories of FPO staff qualifications (education, grade, performance ratings, performance awards, training) only FPO staff training was significantly ($p = .05$) related to FPO service quality ratings with a modest correlation of .24. There was also a significant difference between the number of training courses (mean scores) attended by staff members in each of the three categories of FPO rankings. During the partial correlation analysis the strength of the predictor variable dropped to .18 ($p = .16$). Training had a .36 correlation with education level,

however there was no association between staff education levels and FPO service quality ratings. Because of this and the relatively modest change in the correlation coefficient between the original analysis (Spearman's rank order correlation) and the partial correlation analysis (Pearson's correlation), education was not classified as a spurious variable.

In the dimension of FPO staff attitudes (self-perceived skills, perception of FPO roles, perceptions of service responsiveness standards, and perceptions of service quality) only the hypothesis relating to perceived service standards was significantly ($p = .01$) related to FPO service quality ratings with a modest $-.30$ correlation coefficient. The inverse relationship did not support the alternative hypothesis. As stated in the Chapter Four Summary, a possible explanation was found when examining two related questions on the managers' survey. In the lower ranking FPOs, both the managers and personnel specialists had higher service response time expectations than the managers and personnel specialists in the higher ranked FPOs. However the lower ranked FPOs were less responsive in service delivery, therefore the gap between service expectations and service delivery was greater in the lower ranked FPOs than the higher ranked FPOs. This indicates that establishing and meeting realistic service standards may be more important than merely having high standards of responsiveness.

Within the category of management status, the level of management (first-level supervisor, second-level supervisor, managers) was significantly ($p = < .01$) related to FPO service quality ratings with a small correlation of $-.17$. As the level of management increased, the perceptions of FPO service quality decreased. The negative correlation was based on the alternative hypothesis which stated that service quality ratings would increase as the level of management increased. The opposite was true. Several explanations could account for this relationship. The focus of first -level supervisors is on the management of subordinates and the basics of hiring, classifying, training, etc., and this is the normal focus of FPOs. These basic administrative services are meeting the needs of first-level supervisors. Second-line supervisors and top managers are involved with organizational goals and objectives have a more strategic focus. It is possible that these needs are not being met by FPOs. The hypothesis relating to years of supervisory experience was not significantly related to perceptions of service quality.

Within the category of management support, the amount of delegated authority (enough, not enough) was found to have a significant ($p = .05$) but weak relationship to perceptions of service quality with a correlation of $.15$. The hypotheses relating to pre-supervisory and post-supervisory training did not show a significant relationship.

Findings and Current Research

All of the hypotheses tested related to research that had been conducted in private sector service industries (insurance, banking, computer, retail) or as the result of surveys conducted by Federal agencies. The research referenced in the private sector was based on hypothesis testing. The research referenced in the Federal Government related to surveys conducted to gather descriptive data regarding program evaluations, and not to test hypotheses. Although the constructs developed in this study are based on previous research and survey findings, the study is not a replication of previous research. Each hypothesis was tested using different survey questions, different measures, and often different statistical methods than previous studies. For this reason only general comparisons can be made when relating the findings of this study to current research. Figure 9 - Comparison of Current Research with Study Findings, summarizes the research findings discussed in Chapter Two, and compares them with the findings of this study. Figure 9 lists the research subject, followed by a representative research finding, and the industry in which the study was conducted. The final column briefly summarizes the findings of this study. This section is organized based on the six dimensions of the

research model: access, product/program design, staff qualifications, staff attitudes, managerial status, and managerial support.

Figure 9

Comparison of Current Research with Study Findings

Current Research Subject	Findings/Researchers	Industry	Findings of this Study
Access			
Physical Access to Services	Ratings increase with ease of access (Zeithaml, et. al. 1990)	Banking	Ratings decrease as FPO distance increases
Method of Contact	Utilization decreases with distance/Ratings not related to method (OPM 1990)	Gov't	Ratings decrease as personal contact decreases -possible spurious relationship
Product/Program Design			
Design critical to effectiveness	Ratings increase with quality (Buzzell, Gayle 1987)	PIMS	Not tested
Program flexibility	Ratings increase with flexibility (OPM 1992)	Gov't	Not tested
Delegated control	Ratings increase with delegation (OPM 1989 1992)	Gov't	Not tested
Product/Program Design			
Responsiveness	Ratings increase with responsiveness (Wiley & Tornow 1991)	Computer	Ratings increase as program response time decreases
Staff Qualifications			
Education	Recommendation: review education level (MSPB 1992)	Gov't	No relationship (not a robust test)
Experience (grade level)	Ratings increase with experience (Ulrich, et. al. 1991)	Retail	No relationship (not a robust test)
Performance ratings/awards	No study conducted	-	No relationship (not a robust test)

Figure 9 (Continued)

Current Research Subject	Findings/Researchers	Industry	Findings of this Study
Staff Qualifications			
Formal training	Recommendation: review training (MSPB 1992)	Gov't	Ratings increased with training
Employee-job fit	Ratings increase with closer match (Parasuraman, et. al. 1991)	Telephone	Not tested
Staff Attitudes			
Self-perceived skills	Ratings increase as skill levels increase (Schlesinger 1991)	Banking	No relationship
Perceived service role	Ratings depend on service mandate (Schneider, et. al. 1980, 1985)	Banking	No relationship
Perceived service standards	Ratings higher with service standards (Reynierse & Harker 1992)	Banking	Ratings higher with lower standards
Perceived service quality	Ratings higher with higher perceptions of service quality (Tornow, Wiley 1991)	Computer	No relationship
Perceived job control	Ratings increase as job control increases (Wiley 1991)	Insurance	Not tested
Job satisfaction	Ratings increase as satisfaction increases (Schlesinger 1991)	Banking	Not tested
Communication	Ratings increase as horizontal/vertical communication increases (Parasuraman, et. al. 1991)	Telephone	Not tested
Teamwork	Ratings increase as teamwork increases (Parasuraman, et. al. 1991)	Telephone	Not tested

Figure 9 - (Continued)

Current Research Subject	Findings/Researchers	Industry	Findings of this Study
Managerial Status			
Management level	Ratings increase as mgmt level increases (DOI 1992)	Gov't	Ratings decrease as mgmt level increases
Supervisory experience	Ratings increase as time in service increases (DOI 1992)	Gov't	No relationship
Managerial Support			
Delegated Authority	Ratings increase with delegated authority (DOI 1992)	Gov't	Ratings increase with delegated authority
Pre-supervisory training	Ratings increase as supervisory skills increase (DOI 1992)	Gov't	weak correlation - .11 ($p = .08$)
Post-supervisory training	Ratings increase as supervisory skills increase (DOI 1992)	Gov't	No relationship

Access

In a study of full service banks, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) found that the accessibility of services provided by customer service personnel and tellers was a primary determinate in perceptions of service quality. This finding is important, as the banking industry stresses the use of automated tellers, on-line personal computer programs, and the use of touch-tone telephones to conduct banking transactions. When OPM conducted an evaluation of the centralized personnel office concept in the U.S. Customs Service, they found that managers who had ease of access had a high usage (62%) of the

centralized FPO services, while those who did not, by virtue of being in another city or state, had low usage (14%) of the centralized services, and formed local “shadow personnel offices” to receive appropriate support. When asked to rate the quality of the centralized FPO services, the ratings of the managers who had personal access was not significantly different than those who obtained services by electronic means (OPM 1990). However, the fact that shadow personnel offices were formed in the field indicates the importance of personal access to the service provider.

The finding relating to FPO proximity is of considerable importance. Managers who had their FPO located on the same installation rated the quality of services significantly higher than managers who had their FPO located on another installation (different part of the city, different city or different state). Another variable relating to access, the method of contacting the FPO for service was also examined. Four degrees of personal involvement were examined: personally, depends on the situation, through my administrative personnel, and through another office. As personal involvement decreased, the FPO ratings decreased. The findings of the study support current service quality research and partially support Federal survey

findings. The customer shows a preference for ease of physical access to the service provider.

Product/Program Design

Buzzell and Gayle's (1987) analysis of the PIMS (Profit Impact of Marketing Strategies) data base, containing information on thousands of business units, stressed the importance of product/program design in determining the effectiveness of a businesses. Tornow and Wiley (1991) found a strong correlation ($r = .91$) between program design responsiveness and customer service quality ratings. OPM has stressed the need to redesign HRM programs to reflect the characteristics of flexibility, simplicity, responsiveness, and delegation of control. The broad-banding test programs conducted by the Navy, Air Force and National Institute of Standards and Technology (see page 62) stressed these characteristics. Implementation of these programs resulted in significant increases in managerial ratings of service quality. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the largest body of literature relating to Federal personnel management during the past five years has been the "call" for HRM program design.

Although this study tested only one of the characteristics of program design (responsiveness), it proved to be one of the strongest predictor variables of service quality, with a correlation of .25, indicating

that programs with shorter response times resulted in higher service quality ratings. This finding is consistent with current research and the on-going efforts by OPM to redesign the current Federal HRM programs.

Staff Qualifications

Organizational theory has stressed the importance of employee qualifications since the early writings of Robert Owens (1813) and Frederick Taylor (1911) (Shafritz and Ott 1991, 11). Only a limited amount of research has been conducted relating employee qualifications to customer perceptions of service quality. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) examined the relationship of employee-job fit (hiring well qualified service employees) and found a weak but significant relationship to service quality. Ulrich, Halbrook, Meder, and Thorp (1991) found that retail stores with higher employee tenure had higher customer satisfaction ratings. When MSBP conducted a study of FPO effectiveness (1992), they found that managers (56%) cited shortcomings in personnel specialist qualifications. Prompted by the MSPB findings, hypotheses relating to employee qualifications in the areas of education level, experience (grade level), performance ratings and awards, and formal training were examined in relation to overall FPO service quality ratings. Formal training had a significant ($p = .05$) rank order correlation of .24 with FPO service quality ratings. Other hypotheses relating to staff

qualifications were not significant. When examining the mean scores relating to staff qualifications in the areas of education level, grade, performance ratings, and performance awards there were not significant differences between the three categories of FPO rankings (based on service quality ratings). For this reason, robust tests of the hypothesis were not possible. In contrast, there was a significant difference between the FPOs based on staff training and the null hypothesis was rejected.

Staff Attitudes

Recent service quality research has been emphasizing the importance of employee attitudes in relation to customer satisfaction. Research by Schlesinger (1991) found that the self-perceived skills of the employees were related to customer satisfaction ratings. Tornow and Wiley's (1991) study of a multi-national computer services company found a strong relationship between employee perceptions and customer perceptions of service quality. Reynierse and Harker's (1992) study of full service banks found a strong relationship between established service quality standards, employee perceptions of service quality, and customer satisfaction ratings. Other studies relating to employee attitudes and customer perceptions of service quality, but not tested in this study, were the importance of job control (Wiley 1991), job

satisfaction (Schlesinger 1991), communication and teamwork (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml 1991).

This study examined staff attitudes relating to self-perceived skills, the perceived role of the FPO, perceptions of service standards, and the perceived quality of FPO services. The hypothesis relating to perceived service standards was significantly ($p = .01$) related to FPO service quality ratings with a modest $-.30$ correlation coefficient. As previously stated, the lower ranked FPOs had a larger gap between expected service standards and actual service delivery than the higher ranked FPOs. This highlights the need for setting and achieving realistic service standards. This finding is also consistent with the theory that customer perceptions of service quality are based on the difference between expectations and the actual service encounter (Gronroos 1984).

No significant relationships were found between any of the other staff attitude variables and FPO service quality ratings. When examining the mean scores relating to staff attitudes in the areas of self-perceived skills, perceived FPO roles, and perceptions of FPO service quality there were not significant differences between the three categories of FPO rankings (based on service quality ratings). For this reason, robust tests of the hypothesis were not possible. In contrast, there was a significant

difference between the FPOs based on service standards and the null hypothesis was rejected

Managerial Status and Support

Tsui (1987), Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991), and Boulding (1993) found that the perceptions of quality varies with the individual customer. The perception of quality is based on prior expectations of what should and what will transpire, and the actual service being delivered during the service encounter. Current private sector research on individual customer expectations was fairly limited and did not facilitate the development of supporting constructs that could be tested in this study. The primary research used as a comparison for this study came from the Department of Interior's (DOI) analysis of personnel management evaluation questionnaires which were administered to over 25,000 employees over a six year period (DOI 1992).

In the organizational dimension of managerial status, DOI found that supervisors with higher management positions and more years of service had higher levels of satisfaction with personnel office services. The results of this study were not consistent with DOI's findings. First line supervisors gave higher personnel quality ratings than second line supervisors or top managers. In addition, there was not a significant

relationship between years of service as a supervisor and FPO service quality ratings.

In the area of managerial support, DOI found that managers with a higher level of delegated authority for managing HR resources provided higher personnel service satisfaction ratings. This study found a similar relationship. The DOI surveys also indicated that personnel satisfaction ratings increased with a managers' self-perception of supervisory skills. This study contained questions relating to how well the Government prepared managers for their first and subsequent assignments as supervisors. Neither had a significant relationship to FPO service quality ratings. The difference between the questions (self assessment vs. how well the Government prepared a supervisor) may account for the difference in study findings.

Implications for Current Theory

The primary theoretical implications of this study are in three distinct but related areas. First, this study extends the current body of perceived service quality research to the Federal sector and specifically to HRM activities. Secondly, this study introduces the criteria of service quality as a measure of personnel/human resource management effectiveness consistent with the stakeholder organizational theories.

The third implication of this study is that it supports the new organizational role of HR/personnel administration.

Service Quality Research

Prior to the studies conducted by Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1985, 1988, 1991) very little scholarly research focused on the concepts of service quality or on developing frameworks to understand service quality and its determinants. Previous studies were primarily bivariate in nature. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml developed an extended service quality model (see Appendix One) in an attempt to “capture” and measure the major organizational variables relating to perceptions of service quality. Their measurement procedures and sampling strategies were first attempts and subject to many design limitations that future studies could overcome (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991, 331). In spite of these shortcomings, their study served as the foundation for future service quality research (Rust and Oliver 1994).

This study has a few of the same characteristics as the initial research conducted by Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml. Their research was the first attempt to comprehensively measure perceived service quality in the service industries. Their model served as a conceptual framework for testing specific propositions developed on the

basis of contributing research studies. The hypotheses were tested using analytical surveys administered to the service providers (customer contact personnel and service managers) and the individual customers. The strongest findings were based on individual responses and the weakest were based on organizational data. The significant aspects of this study parallel the research conducted by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml. Relevant research findings were incorporated into the propositions of the FPO service quality conceptual model. The propositions of the model were tested using analytical surveys administered to the service providers (personnel specialists) and the customers (Federal managers). The strongest findings in this study came from the individual units of analysis and the weakest findings were obtained in the propositions examined at the organizational level (staff qualifications and staff attitudes).

Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml's Extended Service Quality Model offered a baseline measurement approach that linked customer perceptions of service quality to specific organizational activities that were hypothesized to improve service quality performance. A similar purpose is offered by this study. It is considered a first attempt to link Federal managers' (customers) perceptions of service quality to specific

FPO organizational activities hypothesized to improve service quality performance.

HR/Personnel Office Effectiveness

Line managers' satisfaction is increasingly being advocated as a meaningful criterion of HR effectiveness (Tsui and Gomez-Mejia 1988, 217). Using client satisfaction to measure effectiveness is not a new idea. It appears as a criterion in most evaluation models. The value of the HR function is related to the extent to which it helps the rest of the organization achieve objectives. Some of the leading stakeholder models of HRM effectiveness are illustrated at Appendix One. They are the Personnel Effectiveness Grid (Peterson and Malone 1975), the Tripartite Framework of Personnel Department Effectiveness (Tsui 1984), and the Action Research Model (Tornow and Wiley 1991). These models use customer satisfaction as one of several measures of HR/personnel department effectiveness. These models, which typify the stakeholder approach to organizational effectiveness, are not designed to identify why levels of customer satisfaction are low or high. The FPO Perceived Service Quality Model, the framework of this study, is designed to identify why levels of perceived quality are low or high. This contribution to HR effectiveness theory helps to identify organizational barriers to the delivery of high quality services.

New HR/Personnel Administration Roles

Changes in how human resources are valued and managed is taking place in the private sector and government organizations. In conjunction with this change, HR/personnel administration is also changing. The traditional approach has been characterized by central leadership provided by top-down control, detailed rules emphasizing compliance, complex and highly technical HR systems, and personnel specialists acting as the primary source of influence and expertise in the system. The evolving approach emphasizes leadership through development of knowledge about systems and effectiveness, core central policy with delegated HRM authority, simplified HR systems emphasizing flexibility, responsiveness, and maximum delegation, and personnel specialists sharing influence with line managers (NAPA 1993, 14-18).

As the FPO and the personnel specialists begin to act in advisory roles and share influence with line managers, the criteria for organizational effectiveness should change from a compliance to a service quality orientation. Line managers' perceptions of FPO service quality, and ways to improve the quality of services delivered should take on more importance. The focus of this study has been on managers' perceptions of service quality and the organizational variables that can lead to improving the quality of this service. For that reason, this study

can make an important contribution to the evolving role of HR/Personnel administration.

Implications for Applied Settings

This research study had four significant findings that have implications for current Federal personnel management policy. The order in which they will be discussed are FPO proximity, HRM program design, management level, and delegated authority.

This study showed a moderate correlation between perceptions of service quality and the location of the FPO. Service quality ratings were higher when the FPO and manager were on the same installation as opposed to another part of the city, state, or in another state. In an effort to cut operating costs the Federal Government has been regionalizing administrative support operations to include personnel offices. In 1985 the U.S. Customs Service consolidated all personnel operations into one office in Washington, D.C. The Department of Defense efforts to consolidate personnel operations have expanded since 1993. Prior to 1993 each major installation had their own FPO. Services (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps) have been directed to regionalize operations. In some instances one central FPO will serve installations of the same service located in a three state region. In other instances, one central office will serve different service installations within commuting

distance. Other Federal agencies such as the Department of Interior are taking similar actions.

As mentioned previously, OPM found that field managers were not utilizing the services of the centralized FPO, and had set up “shadow” personnel operations. Based on the OPM survey and the findings of this study, managers prefer to have the personal contact that having the FPO located on the same installation provides. The current trend in regionalization may work against managerial perceptions of FPO service quality. The use of electronic technology to provide personnel services may not be sufficient.

The second major finding of this study relates to HRM program design. The design characteristic of responsiveness relating to position classification showed a moderate correlation to perceptions of service quality. This finding supports the current recommendations of NAPA, MSPB, and OPM. These agencies have all highlighted the need to revise current hiring, classification, performance management, and pay programs. Although specific recommendations vary, there is general agreement that the system designs must be characterized by simplicity, flexibility, responsiveness, and delegated execution authority. OPM is in the process of implementing redesigned work classification and labor-

management relations programs. This study fully supports such an effort.

The third major finding was that first-level supervisors rated service quality higher than second level supervisors and top managers. Several explanations could account for this relationship. The focus of first-level supervisors is on the management of subordinates, which includes the functions of hiring, classifying, and training. These are the traditional administrative support activities that have been provided by FPOs over the years, and the areas that oversight agencies continuously evaluate for effectiveness. Second-level supervisors and top managers are normally concerned with organizational objectives and goals and have a strategic focus. This strategic focus is a fairly new role for most FPOs. A 1993 NAPA report indicated that some agencies are beginning to move in this direction, but that fundamental changes are needed (NAPA 1993, 34). The implication of the literature and of this study is that the needs of higher level managers are not being met by FPOs. The reasons may vary, however there is a clear need for FPOs to communicate with second-level supervisors and top management to clarify their concerns.

The fourth significant finding of the study was that the supervisors and managers who have been delegated sufficient authority to manage

their human resources provide higher FPO service quality ratings than those who do not have sufficient authority. This finding is consistent with the DOI survey findings and the large body of literature emphasizing the need to empower employees or give them sufficient authority to act. Of the 234 responses to the question regarding delegated authority, 45% of the managers indicated that they did not have sufficient authority to manage their human resources. Reasons for not having sufficient authority were not examined. Plausible explanations are the over-restrictive nature of Federal personnel management directives (the Civil Service System), and another may be the restrictive style of top management within the organization. Both explanations represent problems that should be investigated by agency management.

Recommendations for Future Research

The broad nature of this study establishes a foundation for future research pertaining to Federal, state, and private sector personnel office service quality. Recommendations for future research will address the need to overcome some of the limitations of this study, thereby strengthening the case for practical application of the findings. The primary limitations deal with the use of secondary data, the level of data used for analysis, the selection of organizations for testing, and the

number of variables measured. The following recommendations should resolve these limitations.

Secondary data was used in this study because of the availability of a large number of excellent personnel management surveys conducted by Federal agencies, and the cost involved in designing and administering original surveys. While this proved to be expedient and an excellent way to conduct a base line study, it also presented some limitations. The structure of the questions limited the data to ordinal levels which in turn limited the level of statistical analysis. In addition, questions were not available to test all of the conceptual model variables. To overcome this limitation, current surveys should be modified to add questions that would test all of the model variables. Insight into the structure of questions and probable nature of responses can be gained from the bi-annual surveys conducted by federal agencies, and the government-wide studies conducted by MSPB and OPM.

The second recommendation is to broaden the categories of stakeholders surveyed to allow the inclusion of additional variables. This study focused on two of the primary stakeholders of FPO services, the personnel specialist and the Federal manager. Additional stakeholders that should be included are Federal employees (those being “managed”) and the installation personnel officer (the manager of personnel

specialists). The inclusion of these groups will provide additional insight to the service receiver and service provider aspects of the model.

The third recommendation pertains to the selection of Federal organizations to be included in a study. The Navy, Air Force, and National Institute of Standards and Technology have implemented “broad-banding” at several installations. Broad-banding, which was discussed in Chapter Two (page 62) incorporates the design characteristics of program simplicity, flexibility, delegated control and responsiveness, into HRM programs involving work classification, pay, incentives, performance management, and position management. The installations currently using the broad-banding concept should be included in future studies.

Incorporating these three recommendations into a comprehensive research study will overcome the limitations of this study and provide a solid foundation for future research in the area of FPO service quality. From this foundation, studies can be conducted on one variable at a time, which should facilitate a richer examination of the causes and consequences than is possible in the broad scope. While substantial effort was expended to be thorough in specifying the constructs supporting the model dimensions, it is entirely possible to have omitted some important variables. Additional qualitative work from the

perspective of Federal managers and employees may reveal other unspecified variables. These efforts would all serve to build on the foundation laid by this research study.

Recommendations for Improving Service Quality

Based on the significant findings of this study, five specific recommendations are provided that could serve to remove the organizational barriers to the delivery of high quality FPO services. These recommendations involve examining alternatives to centralization, implementing redesigned HRM programs, satisfying the needs of top management, delegating HRM authority, and using service quality as a performance measure.

Alternatives to Centralization

The findings of the study indicate that Federal managers give preference to having personal contact with the service provider and having the FPO located on the same installation. The trend toward centralization/regionalization of services appears to work against service quality. Recognizing the need to reduce administrative costs, approaches other than centralization and regionalization need to be examined. Some private sector approaches to cutting HR administrative costs should be considered:

- a. Reassessment of HR services. American Express conducted surveys on the importance of various HR services to line operations. They found that much of the work they were performing was not a priority to line management, and some of the work that was critical to managers wasn't being done. To become more valuable to line management, the HR department set new goals: reduce duplication, make the best use of technology, and provide greater strategic value (Overman 1994, 50-53).
- b. Outsourcing. Mobile Corporation is in the process of testing the "outsourcing" of HR functions. As a cost reduction measure, resources outside of the company are contracted to perform HR activities. Their first pilot program is the outsourcing of their retirement (401K) program administration (Seeley 1992, 45).
- c. Creating a New HR Company. IBM may have gone the farthest in restructuring HR, by starting a new company called Workforce Solutions to provide HR programs and services to IBM's federation of companies. Some of the HR functions remained with the companies, and were decentralized under the control of line management (i.e.

employee relations, equal employment). The new company, Workforce Solutions, competes for IBM HR services (IBM line management has the option of outsourcing) and markets its services and products to non-IBM customers (Seeley 1992, 46).

Redesigned HRM Programs

The findings of the study and the literature review indicate that HRM program designs characterized by simplicity, flexibility, responsiveness, and delegation of authority positively influence perceptions of service quality. This the recommendations of the National Productivity Review, MSPB and NAPA. These recommendations are:

- a. Eliminate full time equivalent (FTE) ceilings, and allow agencies to manage based on their personnel budget.
- b. Congress, through legislative changes, should provide greater latitude to agencies in designing incentive and award systems
- c. Congress should approve the recommendation to replace today's current classification system with a system designed around broad work criteria.

- d. Reform basic HRM systems such as employee relations and benefits (streamline, consolidate, simplify), and recruitment and retention (replace numerous appointment authorities with a broader consistent process and emphasize performance over seniority in downsizing) (NAPA 1993, 34-43).

The Needs of Top Management

The findings of the study indicate that first-level supervisors rate the FPO services higher than second-level supervisors and managers. Although the reasons for this are not clear, it is possible that FPO services are oriented toward first-level supervisors and are not meeting the needs of higher levels of management. Much of the current literature suggests that this is true. As human resource management has acquired greater importance for organizations, the research and professional literature has increasingly distinguished between human resource management and strategic human resource management (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall 1988, 454). The distinction is intended to differentiate between the functional and administrative roles (serving first-level management) of HRM, and the integrated and strategically driven roles which would be oriented toward the focus of higher levels of management. A 1993 NAPA Report supports this effort and calls for

HRM integration into the organizational planning process (NAPA 1993,

35). HRM integration involves the following actions:

- a. Give HR issues a voice in the formulation and design of organizational objectives, plans and programs. NAPA proposes the formation of Councils on Human Resource Management composed of top leaders, managers, and employee representatives.
- b. The HR professional staff needs to participate in the strategy formulation, develop supportive HR plans, and insure the integration and implementation of the resulting HR goals and objectives.

Delegated HRM Authority

The findings of the study indicate that managers who have been delegated sufficient authority for managing their human resources rate FPO service quality higher than managers who have not been delegated sufficient authority. The survey indicated that 45% of the Federal managers had not been delegated sufficient authority. According to MSPB (1993), the problem of insufficient authority to manage human resources can be attributed to detailed laws and regulations that prescribe their required actions in detail as well as overly restrictive top level managers who make or review the HR decisions of line managers

(MSPB 1993, 34). MSPB recommended that agency heads should provide the necessary leadership for:

- a. reducing their agencies' internal personnel policies and procedures to a smaller and more manageable size, and
- b. delegate greater accountability to their managers.

Service Quality as a Performance Measure

The basic premise of this study was that perceptions of service quality are a measure of FPO performance. As stated in the literature review and highlighted in two MSPB studies (1990, 1993), the basis for evaluation of FPO effectiveness has been adherence to personnel policies, guidelines, and objectives. As a result, the orientation of the FPO staff has been on compliance. The MSPB recommends balancing customer service with compliance (MSPB 1993, x). This balance may be difficult to achieve. A focus on service quality may be more appropriate to assessing effectiveness. Normally the military is thought of as being rigid and compliance oriented. The Air Force's Air Combat Command took a new approach to organizational evaluation and disbanded their annual Inspector General compliance visits to each organization. In its place, they developed a self-administered assessment guide which has a service quality focus. The same assessment guide applies to all organizations, including the FPOs. Seven quality oriented categories are covered. One

of the categories is customer focus and satisfaction. This category examines the organization's relationships with customers and its knowledge of customer requirements to include current trends and levels of customer satisfaction (Department of the Air Force 1993). If the Air Force's largest combat command can make a move from compliance to quality to assess organizational effectiveness, it appears logical that the Federal personnel community could make a similar change.

Summary

The Federal personnel system's chief failing is that it does not meet the needs of line managers...Can Federal human resource management become more strategic, adaptive, and responsive to manager's needs? The answer is a resounding yes! But major changes are needed (Perry 1993, 14).

The quotation was taken from the article by James Perry, "Transforming Federal Civil Service" which appeared in The Public Manager, Fall, 1993. Perry's recommendations centered around decreasing the regulatory character of current systems and diffusing ownership for human resource management. The key to these recommendations centered on FPO responsiveness, moving HRM responsibility to line managers, and having the personnel specialist play a more consultative role. The article by Perry is typical of those calling for change in the Federal Civil Service System and in the operation of

FPOs. Numerous articles and studies by Federal oversight agencies have called for change by being more responsive to the needs of Federal agencies and line management. The need for change has been clear, and many recommendations for change have been made. However, there is very little empirical research to suggest that any of the recommendations will actually improve the Civil Service System and the quality of services provided by the personnel office. This study responded to the need, by empirically examining organizational variables believed to influence the quality of services provided by FPOs. Through the use of analytical surveys administered to personnel specialists and Federal managers in six Federal organizations, major organizational barriers to the delivery of high-quality FPO services were identified. Based on the findings of this study five specific recommendations were made that should help to remove the organizational barriers to the delivery of high quality FPO services.

Improving the overall effectiveness of FPO service quality is not an easy undertaking, but the potential benefits are certainly worth the effort. Changes are needed, and the results of this study and related research will help to make Federal HRM become more strategic, adaptive, and responsive to manager's needs.

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APPENDIX 1

MULTIPLE-CONSTITUENCY MODELS

List of Multiple-Constituency Models

<u>Model</u>	<u>Page</u>
Service Quality	211
The Tripartite Framework	215
The Action Research Model	218
The Personnel Effectiveness Grid	220

The Service Quality Model

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry developed a conceptual model of service quality (page 213) that indicated customer's perceptions of service quality performance were influenced by four distinct gaps. They identified these as organizational gaps that can act as barriers to the delivery of high quality customer service. These gaps were identified as:

- Gap 1 - The difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of customer expectations.
- Gap 2 - The difference between management perceptions of customer expectations and service quality specifications.
- Gap 3 - The difference between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered.
- Gap 4 - The difference between service delivery and what is communicated about the service to the customer.

The model also shows the criteria customers use to evaluate service quality performance. These criteria are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The Extended Service Quality Model identifies constructs that potentially affect the magnitude and direction of the four service quality gaps. Both models were discussed in

a study conducted by A. Parasuraman, Leonard L. Berry, and Valarie A. Zeithaml, and reported in the article, "Perceived Service Quality as a Customer Based Performance Measure: An Empirical Examination of Organizational Barriers Using an Extended Service Quality Model," Human Resource Management, Volume 30, Number 3, (Fall 1991) pages 335-364.

Figure 10

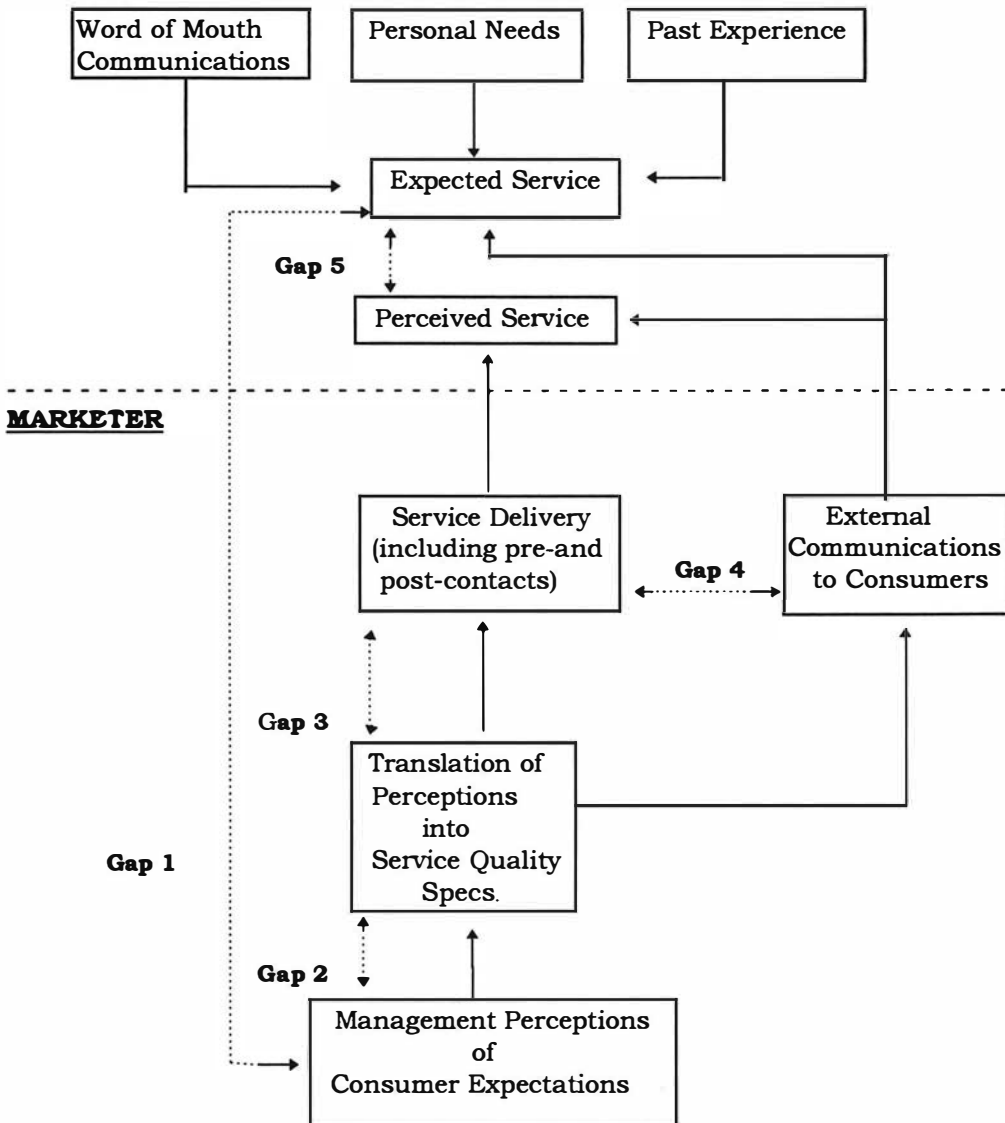
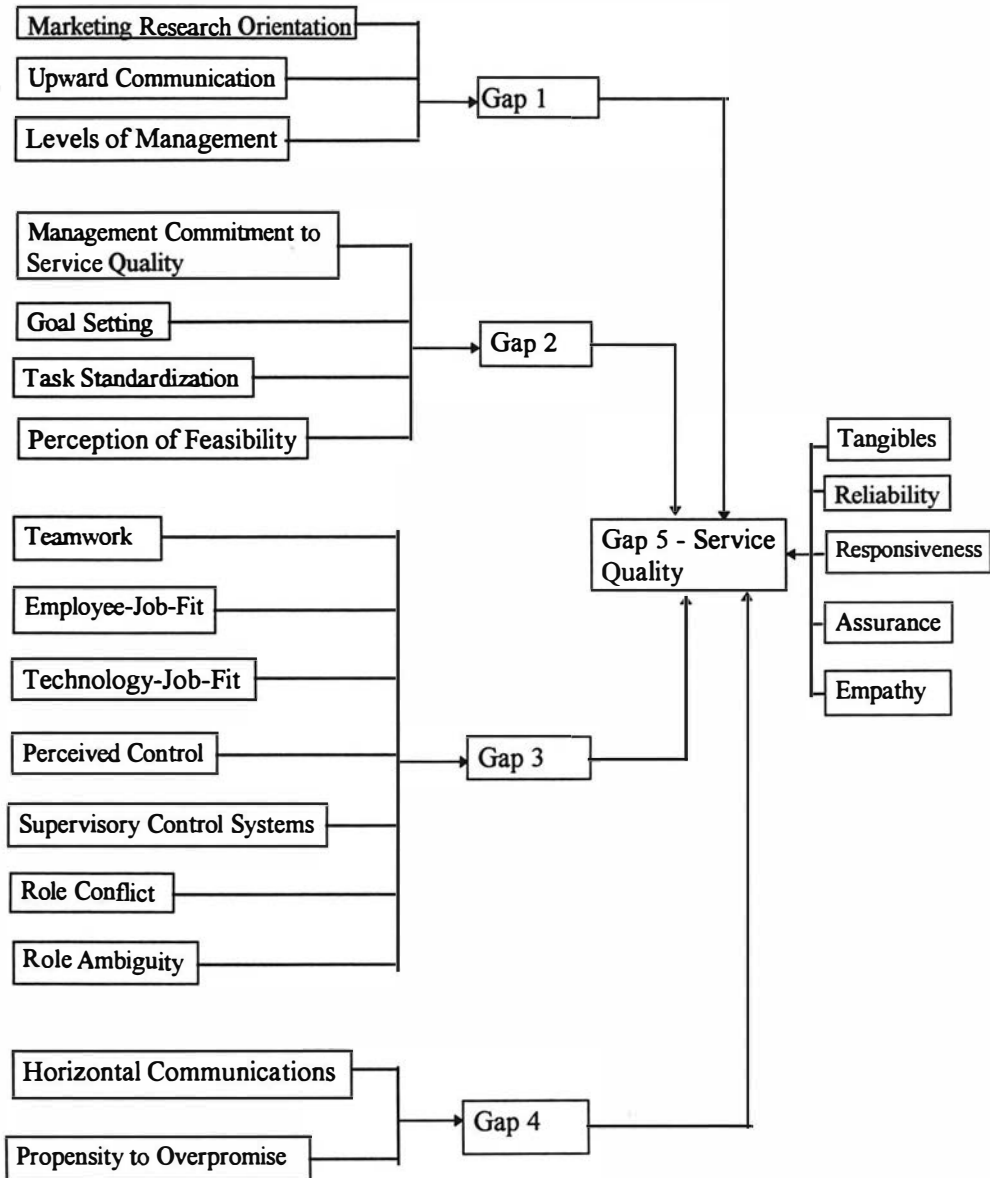
Conceptual Model of Service QualityCONSUMER

Figure 11

Extended Model of Service Quality

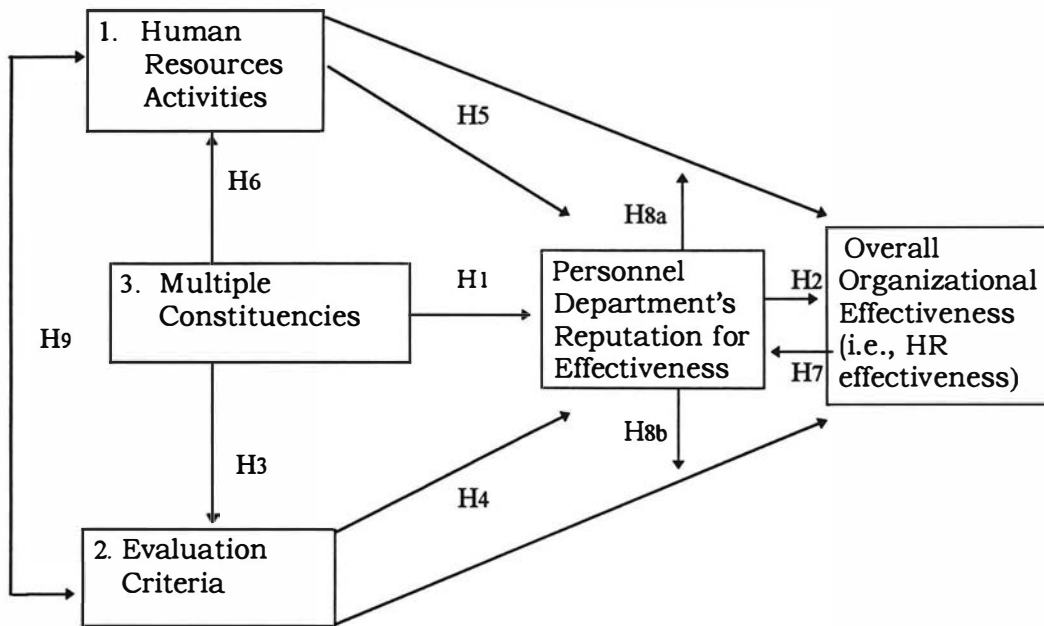
A Tripartite Framework of Personnel Department Effectiveness

The tripartite framework focuses on the personnel department from three perspectives: departmental activities, evaluation criteria, and clients or constituencies. The framework describes how each of these three sets of variables may be related to the personnel department's overall reputation for being effective, as well as to certain aspects of overall organizational effectiveness. The model was presented in Anne S. Tsui's article, "Personnel Department Effectiveness: A Tripartite Approach," Industrial Relations, Volume 23, Number 2, (Spring 1984), pages 184-197. The model is based on nine testable hypotheses. The relationships of the hypotheses (H1 - H9) are indicated in the model shown on page 217. The hypothesis are stated as follows:

- H1 - The personnel department will be more effective when it satisfies the demands of the more, rather than the less critical constituencies.
- H2 - The personnel department will contribute more to organizational effectiveness when it is effective with a large rather than a small number of constituencies.
- H3 - The evaluation criteria which are instrumental for gaining effectiveness by the personnel department will differ according to constituencies.
- H4 - The personnel department that uses multiple criteria to gauge its performance will be more effective than one that relies on a single effectiveness criterion.

- H5 - The personnel department that engages in a wide variety of activities, including many non-routine tasks, will be more effective than one that engages in a small and routine set of tasks.
- H6 - The activities which are instrumental for gaining effectiveness by the personnel department will differ for different constituencies.
- H7 - The overall human resources effectiveness in line organizations will differ for the most, the partially, and the least effective personnel departments.
- H8 - The reputation of the personnel department will moderate the relationship between human resources activities (Hypothesis 8a) or evaluation criteria (Hypothesis 8b) and overall organizational human resource effectiveness.
- H9 - The personnel department will focus more of its attention on those activities associated with evaluation criteria than those without them.

Figure 12

A Tripartite Framework of Personnel Department Effectiveness

Action Research Model: Employee Attitudes - Customer Satisfaction - Organizational Effectiveness

Walter W. Tornow and Jack W. Wiley conducted research on the actual interrelationships between customer satisfaction, leadership and management practices, and organizational performance, building on previous service quality research. Their research was conducted in a major division of a multinational computer corporation. The results were presented in an article, "Service Quality and Management Practices: A Look at Employee Attitudes, Customer Satisfaction, and Bottom-Line Consequences," Human Resources Planning, Volume 14, Number 2, (1991), pages 105-115. The study findings were summarized in their Action Research Model, presented on the following page.

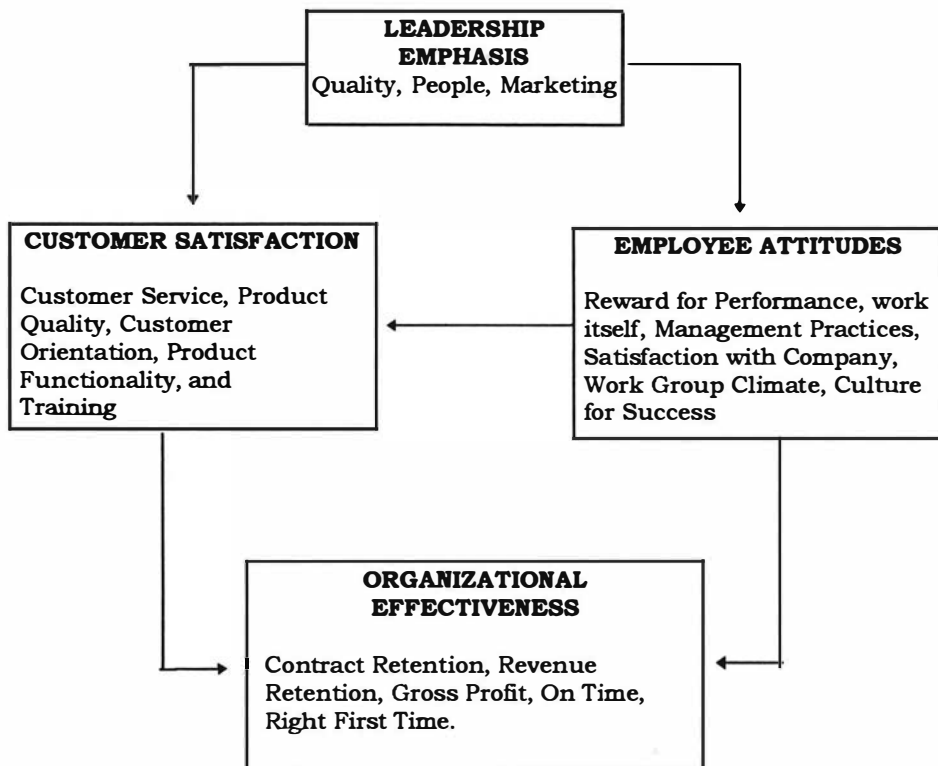
The Action Research Model conceptually summarizes and interprets the study's major findings about the interrelationships among employee attitudes/perceptions, customer satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness, and the underlying management practices and leadership culture of the organization. The model relationships are summarized:

1. Customer satisfaction is related to organizational effectiveness, primarily to contract retention. Customer satisfaction is also related to employee attitudes and perceptions regarding the organization, its values, and management practices.

2. Employee Attitudes relate to customer satisfaction, and how they perceive their organizational environment are linked to important measures of organizational effectiveness.
3. Both employee attitudes and customer satisfaction are related to perceptions of management practices and the organization's culture for success.

Figure 13

Action Research Model: Employee Attitudes - Customer Satisfaction - Organizational Effectiveness



The Personnel Effectiveness Grid (PEG)

Donald J. Peterson and Robert L. Malone presented a model for conducting evaluations of personnel departments in their article, "The Personnel Effectiveness Grid (PEG): A New Tool for Estimating Personnel Department Effectiveness," Human Resource Management, (Winter 1975), pages 10-21. Their model is a three dimensional grid which can be used to predict the likely relative effectiveness of the personnel function in different organizational environments.

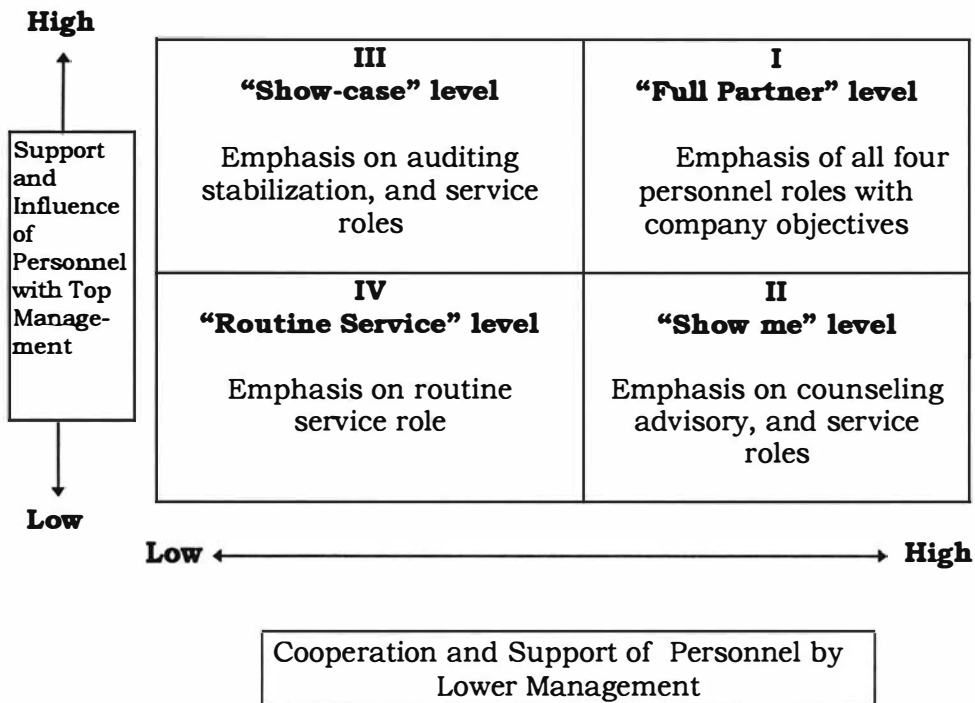
The basic assumption of the model is that all four of the personnel department roles are properly supported and integrated toward achieving company objectives. These activities or roles are: (1) auditing or research, (2) stabilization or control, (3) counseling and advisory, and (4) service and miscellaneous.

The three axes of the model are (1) support and influence extended to personnel by top management, (2) cooperation and support of personnel by lower management, and (3) perceived personnel staff qualifications and the quality of personnel objectives and programs in support of company objectives. The first two factors (axes) are shown in the model on page 221 and the third factor (axis) is presented on page 223.

The four PEG quadrants are summarized in terms of the extent that top and lower management influence the performance level of the four personnel roles.

Figure 14

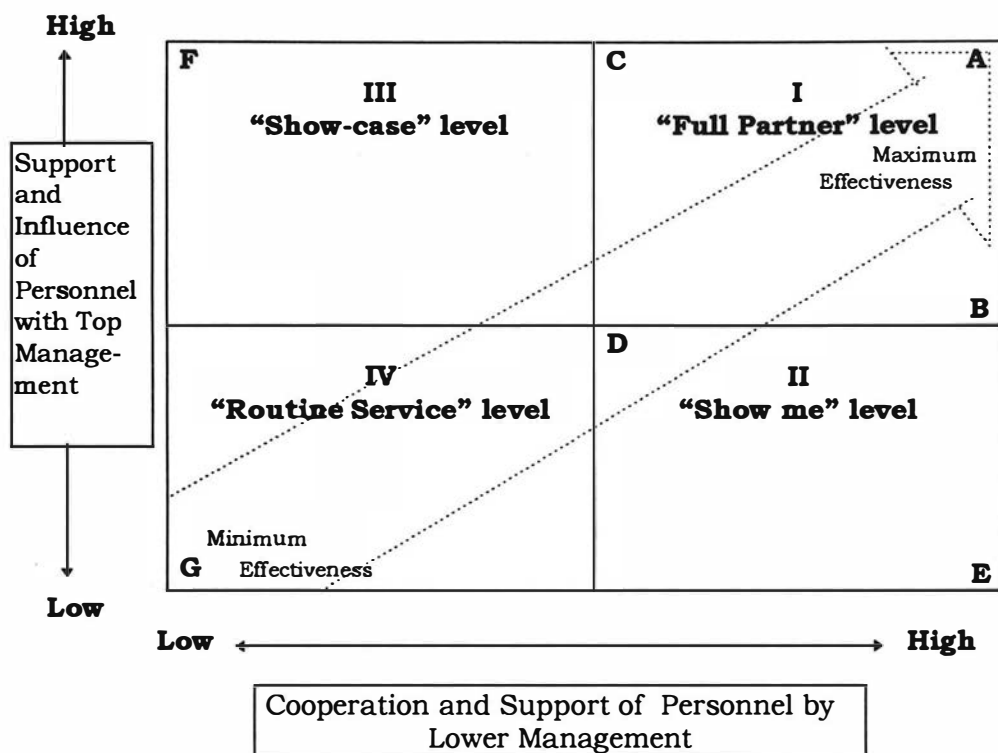
The Personnel Effectiveness Grid (Peg)



Note: The four quadrants of the grid depict the hypothesized relationships and effectiveness levels of the personnel function in the same order as the quadrant numbers, i.e. I, II, III, IV.

The influence of the third factor (personnel qualifications and quality of programs) is visualized as a vector (model on page 223) showing that as personnel qualifications and program quality increase, the overall effectiveness of the personnel department increases. (going from “G” to “A”)

Figure 15

The Personnel Effectiveness Grid (Peg) With Qualifications Added

Note: The PEG, with the Qualifications vector superimposed on the basic grid (dotted lines), illustrates the 7 hypothesized effectiveness levels of the personnel function in decreasing order from A through G.

APPENDIX 2

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

PERSONNEL SPECIALIST SURVEY

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICE

A Special Study by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

Purpose of the study: To find (1) whether there is a difference in the perceptions of the personnel office staffs and the managers regarding the role of the personnel office and the delivery of service, and (2) whether any and what kind of changes in the area of personnel management could be made. Results from the study will be reported to Congress and the President and made available to the public. If possible, we will recommend improvements to Federal policy makers. The study will not attempt to evaluate the operation of any specific personnel office.

Authority: This study is conducted under the authority of 5 U.S.C. 1205. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) is an independent Federal agency created by Congress in 1978. One of our tasks is to monitor the health of the Federal personnel system.

Instructions: Please move quickly through the questions; your initial thoughts are probably the best answer to the questions. Relate your responses to those personal experiences involved in the direct and actual delivery of services. After completion of the questionnaire, the group will openly discuss these and other issues not covered by the questionnaire.

We will keep your answers confidential. Please do not put your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Thank you for your assistance. If you would like a copy of the report published as a result of this survey, please contact:

Mr. Frederick L. Foley
U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
Office of Policy and Evaluation
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20419
Tel: (202) 653-7820

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
QUESTIONNAIRE for PERSONNELLISTS
(NON-SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL SPECIALISTS AND TECHNICIANS)
May 23, 1991

(226)

1. What is your job title, series, and grade? _____

2. What are your main work assignments? _____

3. What was your highest level of education?
 1. ☐ High school
 2. ☐ Some college
 3. ☐ Bachelor's degree
 4. ☐ Some graduate study
 5. ☐ Master's degree and beyond
4. What was your major field of study beyond high school? _____

5. If you worked in other Federal agencies before this one, please show agency name, number of years worked, title, series, and grade(s), beginning with the most recent and going back five years. _____

6. What were your summary ratings from your performance appraisals for the past three years?

1988 _____

1989 _____

1990 _____
7. List awards for achievement and performance for the past three years (cash awards or other types of recognition): _____

8. List the Government-sponsored training courses (classroom or OJT), together with their length of time, you have completed in the last five years: _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

9. If you are a personnel specialist, indicate the method by which you first entered a personnel specialist position:

1. ☐ Selection from OPM/CSC register (FSEE PACE, etc.)
2. ☐ Schedule B appointment
3. ☐ Selection under merit promotion
4. ☐ Accretion of duties from clerical/technical position
5. ☐ Agency Internship
6. ☐ Presidential Management Internship
7. ☐ Upward mobility program
8. ☐ Other _____

10. Do you agree that the current role of your personnel office is:

A. To help managers get their jobs done.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
2. ☐ Agree
3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
4. ☐ Disagree
5. ☐ Strongly disagree

B. To see that everyone complies with the law, OPM regulations and agency policy.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
2. ☐ Agree
3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
4. ☐ Disagree
5. ☐ Strongly disagree

C. To protect the rights of employees.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
2. ☐ Agree
3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
4. ☐ Disagree
5. ☐ Strongly disagree

D. To promote efficiency through effective human resources management.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
2. ☐ Agree
3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
4. ☐ Disagree
5. ☐ Strongly disagree

E. Write in any other personnel office role you think is important: _____

11. Do you believe your client managers would agree that the current role of your personnel office is:

A. To help them get their jobs done.

- 1. ☐ Strongly agree
- 2. ☐ Agree
- 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. ☐ Disagree
- 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

a1. How well do you believe your office carries out this role? _____

B. To see that everyone complies with the law, OPM regulations and agency policy.

- 1. ☐ Strongly agree
- 2. ☐ Agree
- 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. ☐ Disagree
- 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

b1. How well do you believe your office carries out this role? _____

C. To protect the rights of employees.

- 1. ☐ Strongly agree
- 2. ☐ Agree
- 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. ☐ Disagree
- 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

c1. How well do you believe your office carries out this role? _____

D. To promote efficiency through effective human resources management.

- 1. ☐ Strongly agree
- 2. ☐ Agree
- 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. ☐ Disagree
- 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

d1. How well do you believe your office carries out this role? _____

- E. Write in any other personnel office role you think your client managers would agree is important: _____
- _____
- _____

- e1. How well do you believe your office carries out this role? _____
- _____

12. How well do you think the managers and supervisors you service believe your personnel office is helping them?

1. ☐ Extremely well
 2. ☐ Very well
 3. ☐ Adequately
 4. ☐ Less than adequately
 5. ☐ Poorly
 Comment? _____

13. Rate the delivery of service by the personnel office in each of the following areas:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No opinion
A. Classification	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Recruiting	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Training	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Labor Relations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Employee Relations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

14. To what extent do you feel that you know enough and are skilled enough to provide excellent service to the people who depend on you?

1. ☐ To a very great extent; I'm well trained and experienced
 2. ☐ To a large extent; I could use more training
 3. ☐ To a small extent; there's a lot I don't know
 4. ☐ To no extent; I'm overwhelmed and need a lot more development

- A. Areas where more training is needed? _____
- _____

15. From your experience in dealing with the managers or supervisors in such areas as classification, recruiting, training, etc., in the personnel office, how would you describe the responsiveness of your office? _____
- _____
- _____

16. From your experience in the personnel office, how would you describe the quality and accuracy of the finished work products and completed actions of your office? _____

17. From your experience in the personnel office, how would you describe the helpfulness of the office in assisting managers with their personnel decisions and effecting their personnel actions? _____

18. If your client managers have found that carrying out their personnel management duties is more difficult than it ought to be, to what extent are the difficulties caused by:

- A. complexity/rigidity in the personnel policies and procedures? 1. ☐ To a large extent
 2. ☐ To some extent
 3. ☐ To a small extent
 4. ☐ To no extent
 5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comment? _____

B. lack of sufficient skill in the personnel staff?

1. ☐ To a large extent
 2. ☐ To some extent
 3. ☐ To a small extent
 4. ☐ To no extent
 5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comment? _____

C. a personnel staff who seem to be overly concerned with strict compliance with the rules and procedures, and not enough with creative, legitimate results?

1. ☐ To a large extent
 2. ☐ To some
 3. ☐ To a small extent
 4. ☐ To no extent
 5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comment? _____

D. a lack of sufficient number of staff resources in the personnel office

1. ☐ To a large extent
2. ☐ To a small extent
3. ☐ To a small extent
4. ☐ To no extent
5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

E. Other _____

19. When a manager is filling a vacancy, what do you think should be a reasonable average time from your receipt of the initial request to the personnel office, to your issuing the certificate of candidates?

1. ☐ Less than 30 days
2. ☐ One to two months
3. ☐ Two to three months
4. ☐ Three to four months
5. ☐ Other _____

20. When a manager needs a position classified by the personnel office, what do you think should be a reasonable time from receipt of the initial request to the decision?

6. ☐ One to two weeks
7. ☐ Two to four weeks
8. ☐ One to two months
9. ☐ Other _____

21. In the past two years, what has your personnel office done for your client supervisors and managers that you consider to have been done especially well? _____

22. In the past two years, what could have been done better for your client supervisors and managers? _____

23. What would you like to see the personnel office do differently? _____

24. What other comments or concerns would you share with us to help us with the study? _____

APPENDIX 3

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

MANAGER SURVEY

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICE

A Special Study by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

Purpose of the study: To find (1) whether there is a difference in the perceptions of the personnel office staffs and the managers regarding the role of the personnel office and the delivery of service, and (2) whether any and what kind of changes in the area of personnel management could be made. Results from the study will be reported to Congress and President and made available to the public. If possible, we will recommend improvements to Federal policy makers. The study will not attempt to evaluate the operation of any specific personnel office.

Authority: This study is conducted under the authority of 5 U.S.C. 1204. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) is an independent Federal agency created by Congress in 1978. One of our tasks is to monitor the health of the Federal personnel system.

Instructions: Please move quickly through the questions; your initial thoughts are probably the best answer to the questions. Relate your responses to those personal experiences involved in the direct and actual delivery of services, i.e., your dealings with the personnel office that provides direct personnel services to you. After completion of the questionnaire group will openly discuss these and other issues not covered by the questionnaire.

We will keep your answers confidential. Please do not put your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Thank you for your assistance. If you would like a copy of the report published as a result of this survey, please contact

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Office of Policy and Evaluation
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20419
Tel: (202) 653-7820

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. What is the level of your management responsibilities? A. ☐ First-line supervisor
B. ☐ Second-level supervisor
C. ☐ Manager, supervising second-level supervisors
D. ☐ "Top" manager, supervising managers
2. What is your current grade or rank? A. GS ☐
B. SES ☐
C. GM ☐
D. Mil ☐
E. Other ☐
3. How many layers of supervision are there between you and the Secretary of your Cabinet Department? _____
4. How many years have you been a supervisor/manager? _____
5. Check below those personnel actions for which you have final approval authority: A. ☐ Performance appraisals
B. ☐ Awards
C. ☐ Selections
D. ☐ Promotions
E. ☐ Disciplinary actions
F. ☐ Position classification
G. ☐ Attendance and leave
H. ☐ Initiating personnel actions
I. ☐ Assigning and reviewing work
J. ☐ Approving leave
K. ☐ Training
L. ☐ Other
6. What do you think about the authorities delegated to you for managing your human resources? A. ☐ Too much authority
B. ☐ About right
C. ☐ Not enough
D. ☐ Don't know/can't judge
Comments? _____
7. How do you usually handle contacts with the personnel office? A. ☐ Personally
B. ☐ Through an administrative person
C. ☐ Through an office at a level above me
D. ☐ Depends on the situation
E. ☐ Other _____

8. Where is your personnel office located?

- A. ☐ In my building
 B. ☐ In another building nearby
 C. ☐ In another part of the city
 D. ☐ In another city
 E. ☐ In another state

9. To what extent had the Government prepared you to handle your supervisory responsibilities (for example, through formal or informal training) before you were selected for your first supervisory position?

- A. ☐ To a great extent
 B. ☐ To some extent
 C. ☐ To no extent
 Comments _____

10. To what extent has the Government provided formal supervisory training following your first assignment to a supervisory job?

- A. ☐ To a large extent, i.e., two weeks or more
 B. ☐ To some extent, i.e., from one to two weeks
 C. ☐ To a small extent, i.e., less than one week
 D. ☐ None

11. Do you agree that the current role of your personnel office is:

A. To help managers get their jobs done.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
 2. ☐ Agree
 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 4. ☐ Disagree
 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

B. To see that everyone complies with the law, OPM regulations and agency policy.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
 2. ☐ Agree
 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 4. ☐ Disagree
 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

C. To protect the rights of employees.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
 2. ☐ Agree
 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 4. ☐ Disagree
 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

D. To promote efficiency through effective human resources management.

1. ☐ Strongly agree
 2. ☐ Agree
 3. ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 4. ☐ Disagree
 5. ☐ Strongly disagree

E. Write in any other personnel office role you think is important: _____

12. What is your experience with the personnel office staff, in your contacts and requests for assistance, in such areas as classification, recruiting, training, etc., in terms of the nature of the responses you received? _____
- _____
- _____

13. What is your experience with the personnel office staff, with respect to the quality and accuracy of their finished work products and completed actions? _____
- _____
- _____

14. Overall, what is your experience with the personnel office staff in terms of their helpfulness to you in making your personnel decisions and in effecting your personnel actions? _____
- _____
- _____

15. To what extent is the personnel staff effective in helping you manage your human resources?

1. ☐ To a large extent
 2. ☐ To some extent
 3. ☐ To a small extent
 4. ☐ To no extent
 5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comments: _____

16. A. When you are filling a vacancy, what do you think should be a reasonable average time from your initial request to the personnel office to your receiving the certificate of candidates?

1. ☐ Less than 30 days
 2. ☐ One to two months
 3. ☐ Two to three months
 4. ☐ Three to four months
 5. ☐ Over four months

- B. Over the past two years, what was the longest and shortest time it took to fill your vacancies?

- | | Longest | Shortest |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Less than 30 days |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | One to two months |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Three to four months |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____ |

- C. If there was an inordinate delay, what was the cause? _____
- _____
- _____

17. A. When you need a position classified by the personnel office, what do you think should be a reasonable average time from your initial request to the decision?

1. ☐ One to two weeks
2. ☐ Two to four weeks
3. ☐ One to two months
4. ☐ Two to three months
5. ☐ Over three months

B. In the last two years, what was the longest and shortest time it took to classify your jobs?

- | | Longest | Shortest | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | One to two weeks |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Two to four weeks |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | One to two months |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____ |

C. If there was an inordinate delay, what was the cause?

18. If you have found that carrying out your personnel management duties is more difficult than you think it ought to be, to what extent are the difficulties caused by:

A. complexity/rigidity in the personnel policies and procedures?

1. ☐ To a large extent
2. ☐ To some extent
3. ☐ To a small extent
4. ☐ To no extent
5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comments _____

B. lack of sufficient skill in the personnel staff?

1. ☐ To a large extent
2. ☐ To some extent
3. ☐ To a small extent
4. ☐ To no extent
5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comments _____

C. a personnel staff who seem to be overly concerned with strict compliance with the rules and procedures and not enough with creative, legitimate results?

1. ☐ To a large extent
2. ☐ To some extent
3. ☐ To a small extent
4. ☐ To no extent
5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

Comments _____

- D. Lack of sufficient staff resources in the personnel office?
1. ☐ To a large extent
 2. ☐ To some extent
 3. ☐ To a small extent
 4. ☐ To no extent
 5. ☐ Don't know/can't judge

E. Other _____

19. Rate the delivery of service by the personnel staff in each of the following areas:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No opinion
A. Classification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Labor Relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Employee Relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Enter the number from the choices below that indicates your best answer to the following questions:

1. ☐ Not at all
 2. ☐ To a small extent
 3. ☐ To a moderate extent
 4. ☐ To a large extent
 5. ☐ To a very great extent
- A. ☐ Provide high quality service overall
 - B. ☐ Inform employees about important change in personnel rules or benefits?
 - C. ☐ Treat people courteously?
 - D. ☐ Provide timely, efficient service?
 - E. ☐ Give accurate answers?
 - F. ☐ Provide a wide scope of personnel service

21. In the past two years, has your personnel office done something for you that you consider to have been done especially well? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If yes, please describe: _____
-

22. In the past two years, has your personnel office done something for you that you consider to have been done especially poorly? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If yes, please describe: _____
-

23. What would you like the personnel office to do (or not do) differently? _____
-

24. What changes, if any, would you like to have made in the Federal approach to personnel management? _____

25. What other comments or concerns would you share with us to help us with the study? _____

Vita

